EPISODES FROM AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY

CLAUDE BRAGDON

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ALFRED A. KNOPF
220 West Forty-second Street
New York

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ROCHESTER
THE MANAS PRESS
1910

INTRODUCTION

About two years ago there was slipped under my office door an announcement of a series of lectures to be given under the auspices of the Theosophical Society by one C. Jinarajadasa, of Columbo, Island of Ceylon. On the front page of the folder was his portrait in half-tone: a dusky young gentleman with curly hair, an untroubled intellectual brow, eyes dreamy yet penetrating behind gold-bowed glasses, a sweet mouth, and a firm chin. It was a face to which I took an instant liking, but the announced lectures did not attract me, for they appeared to deal with matters with which I had been long familiar through the theosophical literature I had read when it was first given to the world in the eighties. I had been interested in that literature, but in common with many others I had been deterred from following up my interest by the bad odor which soon afterwards came to be attached to the very word Theosophy by reason of the internecine warfare of the Society, and of the alleged exposure of Madame Blavatsky, its founder, by a member of the London Society for Psychical Research. The Theosophists I happened to have known did not particularly attract me; I had no means of testing the validity of the claims made concerning the giving of this alleged ancient wisdom to the Western world; moreover, the reiterated insistence upon Mahatmas and their miracles, with so little said about conduct of life, had seemed to me a dangerous inversion of the

true order. I had therefore ceased my trafficking with latter-day Theosophy altogether, though the belief still lingered that behind that fantastic curtain lay some vital, some illuminating truth.

I was sufficiently interested in the leaflet to which I have referred, to attend one of the lectures it advertised, and gained my first view of the man who was to unlock a closed door of my consciousness. The subject of his lecture was *The Law of Karma;* there was nothing new in it for me, since the law of karma was to my thinking as much a part of the general scheme of things as the law of gravitation itself. The exposition was adequate, but not eloquent, delivered in excellent English, in a wonderfully pleasant voice. The lecturer as he progressed gave glimpses of a remarkable and charming personality, of great earnestness, refinement, spirituality, and intellectual power. I have heard the comments of many persons who attended his lecture, upon whom he seems to have made the same deep impression, not so much by what he said—for to many that seemed nonsense—as by what he was. At the end, my curiosity being gratified, I went away counting it an evening not ill-spent, though far from lively, and dismissed the matter from my mind.

On the following morning, as I was walking down the street I encountered my young Sinhalese aimlessly wandering in the opposite direction. I was seized by an impulse not to let him vanish out of my life, and under pressure of it I spoke to him, explaining that I

had heard him lecture, was interested, and knowing something of Theosophy, craved first-hand information which I had reason to believe he could supply. He was pleasant and accommodating, but at the same time showed a certain reserve, which I afterwards found to be characteristic of the man, or perhaps of his race. We were soon facing one another from opposite armchairs in the club library, for all the world like two friendly but wary antagonists about to begin some absorbing game for a high stake. It was, in point of fact, a game which we were playing: part of the great game of life. The stake was the most precious a man can play for—the soul's salvation; our cards were our knowledge of life: if his proved higher I lost; but all paradoxically, if I lost I won, for if he converted me to his way of thinking I asked nothing better; but I believed that I held a good hand (to carry out the figure), and I was keen to play it for all it was worth. The opening being mine, I led from my long suit first: my knowledge of the undignified history of the Theosophical Society and of the eccentric personality of its founder. He answered all my questions directly and well, mitigating nothing. In speaking of Madame Blavatsky he did not claim that she had never made mistakes, nor did he deny that she had faults of character, but sketched the portrait, with all the reality of life, of a great and puissant personality attempting, amid treacheries, misrepresentations, and discouragements of every sort, to carry out a singularly difficult mission

for which she was in many superficial ways unfitted: making mistakes, suffering from them, learning by them, and finally delegating her task to another (Mrs. Besant), whom she had trained for the purpose. The dissensions which had at various times rent the Society he seemed to regard as the reverse of unfortunate, for though they had interfered with the rapid spread of Theosophic knowledge, like certain diseases they had purged the organism, in that they had discouraged triflers and faddists, and drawn together into a compact and workable body those earnest and devoted persons who perceived their mission to be not the forcing of their teachings upon reluctant minds, but the offering of them to those who felt the need of them. The Society, as he phrased it, existed for the sake of Theosophy, and not Theosophy for the sake of the Society, that being only the small, self-conscious center, as it were, of a new stirring of the soul of the world, as yet only in its beginnings, of which Spiritualism, Christian Science, the New Thought, the mystical and humanitarian movement within the churches, and the altered attitude of science towards the mysteries of existence, are so many outward and more unconscious pulsations. Every reaction against the purely materialistic conception of life was, to my young man's view, essentially theosophic, and what he looked for was not so much the growth of the Society into a rich and powerful organization, as the silent and unconscious assimilation through it by the world of the fundamental Theosophic tenets:

karma, reincarnation, man's finer bodies, and the like. America was destined to be the stage on which would be enacted the next great world drama: the attempt to develop a people and a government of which human brotherhood would be the central and controlling idea. America, therefore, was the most favorable field for a propaganda the avowed chief aim of which was "to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color."

All this and more I gathered from my many talks with Mr. Jinarajadasa, for we saw one another often. The more I saw of him the better I liked him, and the more remarkable he seemed. At times it was as though his lips had been touched by a coal from the altar, for he talked like one inspired. The very presence of a man of his race and type in a society such as ours seemed to me highly significant, even dramatic. A graduate of Cambridge University, and therefore equipped with that learning which the Anglo-Saxon gives his most favored sons, gifted with that ease and polish which extended travel and much contact with cultivated people alone impart, he used these accomplishments, and all the others which were his by nature, solely in the service of his spiritual message—the gift of Asia to the West.

He had few belongings, lived, so to speak, in a trunk: a wanderer, an ascetic, yet I think I never met a happier man. All consecrated lives, no matter how hard, are happy, but the secret of this man's happiness, I gathered, lay

in the fact that he was doing the work of those whom he called the Masters—the Men Behind. To him Theosophy had never been that granite mountain of sublime thought which I had hitherto conceived it, but a full, active life of endeavor on various planes of being, under the guidance and instruction of a beloved friend to whom he was linked by the closest karmic ties, and who, in turn, was in communication with those highly developed human beings, supreme in wisdom, power, and goodness: the Elder Brothers of Mankind.

Through my friend, and later, from other sources—sources for the most part available to anyone*—I learned enough concerning the origin and aims of the Theosophical movement to convince me that it had a significance and importance enormously greater than an indifferent world is at present prepared to allow; that at no very distant date its small beginnings, its various vicissitudes, the personalities and life histories of its leaders, would become a subject of general interest and attention. In anticipation of this, and to correct, if possible, many grotesque misconceptions, I have patched, rather than woven together stray strands of several singularly tangled lives—strands which some day someone may weave into a pattern which shall amaze mankind.

* *Old Diary Leaves*, by Henry Steele Olcott; *The Occult World*, by H. P. Sinnett; *H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters of Wisdom*, by Annie Besant; *Reminiscences of H. P. Blavatsky*, by the Countess Constance Wachmeister; *Five Years of Theosophy; Letters That Have Helped Me*, Vol. II.

EPISODES FROM AN UNWRITTEN HISTORY

H. P. B. AND HER ADEPT TEACHER.

THE history of the Theosophical movement abounds in episodes more vividly dramatic than can be found in the most imaginative fiction. The incident with which that history may be said to open, the first meeting of H. P. Blavatsky with her Master, is surcharged with the very spirit of romance.

Helena Petrovna, a Russian of high birth, married at seventeen to General Nicéphore Blavatsky, an old man from whom she had promptly fled, thereafter roamed about the world in search of knowledge. The year 1851 found her in London, still young in years, though old in worldly experience; a spoiled child grown into a vivid, violent, yet withal charming woman, about whom were whispered, even then, tales of those occult arts with which her name is to this day more associated than with those unique contributions to the literature of mysticism which will doubtless win for her the enduring remembrance of mankind.

Of her Adept Teacher little is known and little can be said. To the world's view he was a Rajput prince, visiting the court of Queen Victoria, but there were a few who knew him as he was: one of the Great Souls of the world, a member of the exalted heir-

archy which presides over the spiritual evolution of mankind.

These are the *dramatis personae* of the prologue, the scene of which is laid in Hyde Park, at night, under an August moon, when the roaring tide of a London season during the year of the International Exposition was at its flood.

During her childhood, Helena had often felt herself to be under the guidance and protection of a sort of "guardian angel," who intervened in moments of danger and saved her from all harm. In London, at the time of which I write, she was out walking with her father, when she encountered in the street a tall Hindu with some Indian princes. To her astonishment, she recognized in him her childhood's protector, whose face and aspect she knew well. Her first impulse was to rush forward and speak to him, but he stayed her with a gesture, and she stood spellbound while he passed. The following evening she went into Hyde Park for a stroll, that she might be alone and free to think over her extraordinary adventure. Looking up, she found herself confronted with the very person who formed the subject of her reverie.

It was thus they met, these two, not as an Indian prince and a Russian noblewoman, but as *Guru* and *Chela,* master and disciple, bound together throughout the ages by ties more close and enduring than those which bind any wife to any husband. "In London, by the Serpen-

tine," her diary tells us, "I met the Master of my dreams."*

Of all that passed between them there we know only the central and essential fact: he told her that she had been chosen to inaugurate a great work in the world, that through her the light of the Ancient Wisdom was to shine again upon men.

The two decades following this momentous meeting, H. P. B. spent in training for her future mission. During a large part of that time she disappeared so completely that her own family were ready to believe her dead. On November 11, 1870, however, Madame N. A. Fadéeff, her aunt, was visited by a mysterious Asiatic, who, having delivered into her hands a letter, vanished before her eyes. The note said, "The noble relatives of Madame H. Blavatsky have no cause to mourn. Their daughter has not departed from this world. She lives, and wishes to make known to those she loves that she is well, and feels very happy in the distant and unknown retreat that she has chosen." The letter then went on to announce her return "before eighteen new moons have risen"—a promise which was exactly fulfilled.

In 1873 she was living quietly in Paris, when the summons came—the call to arms—for which she had been waiting. Her orders were to go to America for a purpose which

* "Nuit memorable. Certaine nuit par un clair lune qui se couchait à-Ramsgate [a "blind" for London] 12 Août—c'est Juillet 31 style Russe—jour de ma naissance—vingt ans!—lorsque je recontrai le Maitre de mes rêves."

would be revealed to her. Without the delay of a day, though poorly supplied with money, she took ship at Hamburg, and made the passage in the steerage, having exchanged her first-class ticket in order to enable a poor woman who had been victimized by a pretended steamship agent to get to America to join her husband.

Arrived in New York, the proud and pampered granddaughter of a Russian princess suffered the indignities and hardships incident to poverty in a great city, being forced to support herself for a time by making cravats. In October, 1874, she was directed to go to Chittenden, Vermont, where she would find "a man named Olcott."

OLCOTT

This second important event in the history of modern Theosophy, the meeting of Madame Blavatsky with Colonel H. S. Olcott, the uniting of the Brain of the new movement with its Hand, was in setting and sentiment as different as possible from the episode first described. Before the raising of the curtain, however, let us go behind the scenes for a moment, for a glimpse of the President Founder.

Henry Steel Olcott won his title of Colonel by distinguished service in the Federal army during the American Civil War, though his most useful service to his country was rendered in various governmental offices. In 1874 he was living in New York, engaged in a success-

ful and remunerative law practice, with no faintest intimation of the "Call of the East" to which he later responded by the consecration of the final thirty years of his life.

Strong, brave, competent, honest, kind, friendly, and sociable; loving a song, a joke, a pipe, a story; he might perhaps not have escaped being classed as a "bromide"—had the classification been invented then—save for a certain intellectual alertness, a disposition to do his own thinking, uninfluenced by prejudice or sentiment.

This intellectual curiosity not unnaturally assumed the form of an interest in the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, the particular *ism* of the passing hour. His attitude was purely that of an inquirer, and his temperate and well-poised mind saved him from a too great credulity on the one hand, and a scornful skepticism on the other. It seemed to him then, as it has seemed to many others since, that after making all due allowance for errors of observation and for the frauds of professional mediums, there remained in the phenomena called spiritualistic a mystery involving a scientific question of the utmost importance to mankind.

In August, 1874, word came to Colonel Olcott of strange happenings on the homestead farm of the Eddy family, in the Green Mountains of Vermont. Constituting himself a Psychic Research Society of one, he spent from August to December in the little hamlet of Chittenden, endeavoring to discover the truth about the "Eddy Manifestations." He

described his experiences and stated his conclusions in letters to two leading New York daily papers, and in a book called *People from the Other World.*

Of the first of these letters, and that by no means the most remarkable, the Daily Graphic said that it told a story "as marvelous as any to be found in history;" but was it, after all, as marvelous as the story I am telling now?—the meeting of two people, from opposite ends of the earth, in that *outré* and remote place, drawn together there, not by accident, nor as the result of individual desire or design, but as the initial move in a great game planned far away and long ago, and played by transcendent beings in whose hands this man and woman were instruments.

Picture a rude and dilapidated old farm house, once a tavern, set in a sparsely settled valley of green pasture land, backed by purple and blue mountains flying flags of drifting clouds. Imagine the vicinage infested, not by "summer people," sportsmen, nature-lovers, but by a motley crowd of cranks, bent solely on the pursuit of the morbid-marvelous, supplied them by the nightly seances of the two Eddy brothers, Horatio and William, the last, and most morose and miserable of a long line of abnormal psychics. This is Colonel Olcott's description of the company in which he found himself:

"Ladies and gentlemen; editors, lawyers, divines and ex-divines; inventors, architects, farmers; pedlers of magnetic salve and mysterious nostrums; long-haired men and short-

haired women; sickly dreamers who prate of interiors and conditions and spheres; clairvoyants and 'healers,' real or bogus; phrenologists, who read bumps without feeling them, under 'spirit direction;' mediums for tipping, rapping, and every imaginable form of modern spiritual phenomena; people from the most distant and widely separated localities; nice, clever people whom one is glad to meet and sorry to part from; and people who shed a magnetism as disagreeable as dirty water. They come and go, singly and otherwise; some after a day's stay, convinced that they had been cheated, but the vast majority astounded and perplexed beyond expression by what their eyes have seen and their ears heard."

This misfit company was one day augmented by the arrival of H. P. B. on her Master's business, looking, as we know, not for ghosts of the dead, but for Colonel Olcott, the man who was to be her colleague in a great undertaking; and if I must tell you how the historic association between these two began, it was in the proffer by him of a light for her cigarette! The incident is typical of their entire relation to one another, into which the question of sex never intruded itself from first to last; they were comrades, brothers in arms, partners in an absorbing and critical enterprise, but lovers never. "Neither then, at the commencement," writes Colonel Olcott, in *Old Diary Leaves,* "nor ever afterwards had either of us the sense of the other being of the opposite sex. We were simply chums; so regarded each other, so called each other."

Not all at once, but very gradually did she reveal herself and her mission to her new found friend; nor did she give him any hint at first as to the existence of the Himalayan Sages nor of her own extraordinary powers. She had been sent from Paris to America to prove the reality of the spiritualistic phenomena, and to show, at the same time, the fallacy of the spiritualistic theory of spirits. Her work was to replace the crude western mediumism, and its morbid preoccupation with ghosts, with Eastern Spiritual Science, and she inaugurated this work by enlightening Colonel Olcott as to the real nature of the phenomena he was witnessing, expounding to him the Eastern theory of Maya, the constitution of man, the plastic nature of the human double, using the Eddy manifestations to illustrate her various points.

EARLY DAYS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Colonel Olcott has described fully the origin and birth—in November, 1875—of the Theosophical Society. The narrative, as he himself says, is very prosaic, the organization being but the natural outcome of a suggestion made to a little company to form a Society for the study of occultism. The founders being all of European blood, with no racial or religious antagonisms, the Brotherhood clause in the Society's platform was not thought of until its sphere of influence extended so as to bring

it into relation with people of diverse nationalities, habits, and beliefs.

A rush-light in the great darkness of mid-Victorian materialism, the Society passed through vicissitudes easily predicated, under the circumstances: from the outside, misunderstanding and derision; from within, indifference to the philosophy; preoccupation with phenomena; and the friction of jarring personalities. "So the membership dwindled by degrees," the President tells us, "until at the end of a year or so, there survived the following: the form of a good organization, sound and strong in its platform; a clangorous notoriety; a few, more or less indolent, members; and an indestructible focus of vitality in the quenchless enthusiasm of the two friends, the Russian woman and the American man, who were in deadly earnest; who never for a moment harbored a doubt as to the existence of their Masters, the excellence of their delegated work, or the ultimate complete success that would crown it." On many an evening, alone together in the Headquarters, after the departure of their guests, who had vainly masked their worldliness and self-seeking behind smiles and fair speeches, the two faithful servants of the Masters would speak of themselves to each other as the Theosophical Twins, and sometimes as a trinity, the chandelier hanging overhead making the third of the party.

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS IN NEW YORK

Supernal wonders, romantic adventures, in an appropriately romantic setting, make their due appeal to the imagination, but to the true connoisseur in such matters the element of surprise and contrast is lacking. Knights and Undines are the natural denizens of mediaeval forests; indeed, when one comes to think of it, no enchanted realm is complete without its enchanters; but what say you, O romance-lover, to Mahatmas and nature spirits at the corner of Eighth Avenue and 47th Street?—Yes, in a New York flat, with a steam radiator in every corner! Here we have a higher power of romance, the new, the true romance: the Spirit of the World engaged in building new temples for its worship "amid the fopperies of the town."

At the "Lamasery," the Theosophical Society's headquarters in those early days, where lived the two founders, there were "phenomena" fresh every hour—or nearly. I will not arouse the latent skepticism of the reader by attempting to describe these happenings; if he cares for details he may glean them from *Old Diary Leaves,* and other contemporary chronicles; but one extraordinary incident I must narrate, because it is important in the history of the Society, and because it gives a glimpse, indeed, a full-length portrait, of one of the prime-movers; not the founders before the world, but the true founders, the Men Behind.

On a certain night the Theosophical Twins had finished their evening's work on *Isis;* H. P. B. had retired to her room, and the Colonel had sat him down to a pipe and to Stephen's *Travels in Yucatan.* Nothing in the evening's incidents had prepared him for any marvel, his mind being bent solely on his book. All at once, as he read, there came a gleam of something white in the right hand corner of his right eye: let him describe what followed: "I turned my head, dropped my book in astonishment, and saw towering above me in his great stature an Oriental clad in white garments, and wearing a head-cloth or turban of amber-striped fabric, hand embroidered in yellow floss-silk. Long raven hair hung from under his turban to the shoulders; his black beard, parted vertically on the chin in Rajput fashion, was twisted up at the ends and carried over the ears; his eyes were alive with soul-fire; eyes which were at once benignant and piercing in glance; the eyes of a mentor and a judge, but softened by the love of a father who gazes on a son needing counsel and guidance. He was so grand a man, so imbued with the majesty of moral strength, so luminously spiritual, so evidently above average humanity, that I felt abashed in his presence, and bowed my head and bent my knee as one does before a god or a god-like personage. A hand was lightly laid on my head, a sweet though strong voice bade me be seated, and when I raised my eyes, the Presence was seated in the other chair beyond the table. He told me he had come at the crisis when I

needed him; that my actions had brought me to this point; that it lay with me alone whether he and I should meet often in this life as co-workers for the good of mankind; that a great work was to be done for humanity, and I had the right to share in it if I wished; that a mysterious tie, not now to be explained to me, had drawn my colleague and myself together; a tie which could not be broken, however strained it might be at times. He told me things about H. P. B. that I may not repeat, as well as things about myself that do not concern third parties. How long he was there I cannot tell: it might have been a half-hour or an hour; it seemed but a minute, so little did I take note of the flight of time. At last he rose, I wondering at his great height and observing the sort of splendor in his countenance—not an external shining, but the soft gleam, as it were, of an inner light—that of the spirit. Suddenly the thought came into my mind: 'What if this be but hallucination; what if H. P. B. has cast a hypnotic glamor over me? I wish I had some tangible object to prove to me that he has really been here; something that I might handle after he is gone!' The Master smiled kindly as if reading my thought, untwisted the *fehtâ* from his head, benignantly saluted me in farewell and—was gone: his chair empty; I was alone with my emotions! Not quite alone, though, for on the table lay the embroidered head-cloth; a tangible and enduring proof that I had not been 'over-looked,' or physically befooled, but had been face to face with one of the Elder

Brothers of Humanity, one of the Masters of our dull pupil-race."

JUDGE

One loyal friend and willing helper the Founders had in William Q. Judge, but he was so much their junior that they could not regard him as an equal third party. As H. P. B. had been sought out and summoned for the work by her Master, so did she in turn single out Judge. She sent for him, and this is his description of their meeting: "It was her eyes that attracted me, the eyes of one whom I must have known in lives long passed away. She looked at me in recognition at the first hour, and never since has that look changed. . . It was teacher and pupil, elder brother and younger, both bent on the one single end, but she with the power and the knowledge that belong but to lions and sages."

On the departure from America of the two Founders they left the work of spreading Theosophy in America to Judge. But the idle, the curious, the miracle-mongers, the morbid lovers of the marvelous, who had thronged the *salon* of the "Russian Pythoness"—what must that great soul have thought of some of them!—sought elsewhere for "phenomena"—and doubtless found it. To the newspapers, also—early and keenly cognizant of the value of the gifted, mysterious, and eccentric foreigner as "copy"—Theosophy *minus* Blavatsky, became a thing of no more value for their purposes than an accident without a casualty,

and the very word vanished, unnoted, from their teeming pages. As a result of this, public interest for a time died down, and the young neophyte passed through one of those times of outward disappointment and inward desolation which seem part of the destiny of the elect. Within his torch-like spirit lay splendid capacities for organization and leadership, but there was naught to organize and lead. Imagine Napoleon without an army, Raphael without a canvas, and you have his predicament to the life. He would go and "hold meeting by himself" week after week, addressing an imaginary audience, reading a chapter from the *Bhagavad Gita,* entering the Minutes, carrying out every detail of a meeting as though he were not the only person in the room, holding the lonely citadel for coming days. Gradually a few gathered around him, these attracted others, and in the ensuing years he built up a strong and admirably equipped Section, aided by a band of willing and capable workers whom he inspired with his own fiery zeal.

No figure rises out of the dim limbo of that recent, though already distant past, with a more engaging presence than that of this handsome Irish-American, and I venture to say that in a movement which has been a forcing-house for greatness, no one developed such power, such capacity, such insight, in so short a space of time—when the pressure was put upon him—as Judge.

There is abundant evidence, aside from the best evidence of all—the fruitfulness of his

labors—that he was under the direct guidance of the Masters. One Adept wrote of him, "when the *presence* is upon him, he knows well that which others only suspect and 'divine'." In the same letter he is referred to as the one "who of all *chelâs* suffers most and demands, or even expects, the least." He was a man of exquisite sympathy and gentleness; stern with himself, he was lenient toward others. Mr. Keightley has said, "Judge made the life portrayed by Jesus realizable to me." He was that rare and beautiful thing, a *practical* mystic. One of his last messages to his intimate band of followers was that they should learn, by actual experience, that occult development comes best, quickest and safest, in the punctilious fulfillment of the small duties of every day.

The work designated to Judge by the Founders was magnificently performed, and notwithstanding his secession from the parent society in 1895, taking with him most, though not all, of his colleagues, his name rightly ranks first, after those of the two Founders, among the great workers and leaders in the Theosophical cause.

SINNETT

The scene next shifts to India, to which country the two Founders betook themselves in 1878, after a brief English sojourn. It was for both of them a home-coming, and felt to be such, notwithstanding the fact that India had never been their home—in that particular

earthly life. As this essay is in no sense a history of the growth of the Theosophical movement, but only a flash-light glimpse of crucial moments in the lives of some of the persons concerned in that movement, I shall not burden my narrative with any account, however brief, of the wonderful work accomplished, during the succeeding years, in reconciling religious differences, in harmonizing warring factions, and in reviving, in the very land which had produced it, that ancient Wisdom Religion, the seeds of which, wafted over seas of space and time, are now so actively germinating in the secret heart of the West. I shall proceed rather to chronicle the advent of the next important recruit to the theosophic ranks: A. P. Sinnett, whose unique distinction it is to have presented Theosophy in such a manner as to arrest the attention, and inspire the respect of the "intellectuals" of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Sinnett has himself told the story fully and interestingly of his relations with Madam Blavatsky and through her with the Masters of Wisdom. His acquaintance with the two Founders began with a visit made by H. P. B. and Olcott to Allahabad, where Mr. and Mrs. Sinnett were living in the style, and amid the society and surroundings made familiar to Western readers through Kipling's vivid tales of Anglo-Indian life. Here let me digress just long enough to explain a mystery which has puzzled many: How did Kipling get his Theosophy and occultism so "straight"? The explanation is simple: Sinnett was editor of

the *Pioneer* and Kipling, as every one knows, was attached to the same paper in a subordinate capacity, and thus had abundant opportunity to glean his information on these subjects from a high and authoritative source. How well he availed himself of his opportunity is shown for example in *The Finest Story in the World;* dealing as it does with the difficult and little understood subject of reincarnation, it reveals an inside knowledge of the matter,—there is not a mistake in it anywhere.

The imagination of another well-known author was touched to some purpose by the vision of Sinnett, H. P. B., and Olcott at Simla, "moving about through the rhododendrons," the vortex of mysterious forces, the pawns of high intelligences. F. Marion Crawford's *Mr. Isaacs* was inspired by the published accounts of Mahatma K. H., and Mr. Crawford's uncle, Mr. Sam Ward, affirms that his nephew having once begun the writing of this work, gave himself no rest, scarcely even food, until it was finished. *Mr. Isaacs* was completed in four weeks, and is unique among the author's many productions. It attained to instant and wide popularity, and shows an intuitive grasp of the subject dealt with, although according to Colonel Olcott, Mr. Crawford made the mistake of having his ideal Eastern adept, Ram Lal, meddle in the love affairs of the hero and heroine, an act inconsistent with the character and policy of these spiritual beings, who just by reason of

their greater knowledge, forbear to interfere with the karma of individuals.

With the whole-souled espousal of Theosophy by the Sinnetts the life of the two Founders underwent another sea change. From obscurity and ostracism so far as the governing class was concerned, they suddenly awoke to find themselves famous, popular. At Allahabad, and later, at Simla, the mysterious wonder-working Russian became the topic of all the tea-tables, and the time of the two was taken up with visits and dinner parties at which H. P. B., if she were in the humor, made bells to ring and roses to fall, and performed greater wonders for the guests, insatiably greedy of phenomena and highly indifferent to religious philosophy.

This social phase did not last long, nor did it end happily: in the conservative little Anglo-Indian world H. P. B.'s Bohemian manners shocked the general sense of propriety, her immense intellectual and spiritual superiority excited envy and resentment, and her uncanny psychical powers made her, in the end, to be regarded with a sort of terror.

Far more profitable and satisfying were the visits the Founders paid to, and received from native princes and holy ascetics with whom, in a hushed company of listeners, they essayed high themes, often amid ideal surroundings, in an air washed by the water of many fountains, sweet with the perfume of many roses. Of life and death and destiny they talked, until the honey-colored tropical moon touched the stained marble steps of the grass-grown tank

with its radiance, and the night-wind stirred the curtains between the fretted columns of the court.

MEETING AT NIGHT

During the sojourn of the two Founders in India both were granted innumerable tokens of the immanence and watchful care of the Masters: sometimes a glimpse, sometimes a voice, again a letter or some message through third parties. Once, visiting the shrine of a temple where the shields, armor and weapons of the Sikh warrior priests were exposed to view, they were greeted with the loving smile of one of the Masters who was for the moment figuring among the guardians of the place. He gave each one of them a fresh rose, with a blessing in his eyes. On another occasion, while in Bombay, H. P. B., Damodar and the Colonel had driven out at night in an open phaeton to the end of the causeway known as Warli Bridge, to enjoy the cool sea-breeze. A magnificent electric storm was raging, unaccompanied by rain, the flashes being so vivid as to light up the neighborhood almost like day. A party of well-dressed Hindus, laughing and talking together, came from a bungalow on a transverse road, passed the phaeton and its occupants, and entered their carriages which were drawn up in line on the Warli Road, and drove off to town. To see them, Damodar, who was sitting with his back to the driver, stood up and looked over the box. As the last party of convivial friends

were coming abreast of the carriage, he silently touched the Colonel's shoulder and motioned with his head to something in that direction. Colonel Olcott thus describes what followed: "I stood up and saw behind the last group a single human figure approaching. He, like the others, was dressed in white, but the whiteness of his costume positively made theirs look gray, as the electric light makes the brightest gaslight look dull and yellow. The figure was a head taller than the group which preceded him, and his walk was the very ideal of graceful dignity. As he came about as far as our horse's head, he deflected from the road in our direction, and we two, to say nothing of H. P. B., saw that it was a Mahatma. His white turban and dress, mass of dark hair dropping to his shoulders, and full beard, made us think it was 'the Sahib,' but when he came to the carriage side and stood not more than a yard from our faces, and laid his hand on H. P. B.'s left arm as it lay on the carriage body, and looked us in the eyes and responded to our reverential salutations, we then saw it was not he, but another, whose portrait H. P. B. wore, later, in a large gold locket, and which many have seen. He spoke no word, but quietly moved toward the causeway, taking no notice of, nor, seemingly, exciting any from the Hindu guests as they rolled away in their carriages towards the town. The recurrent blazes of electric light lit him up as he stood by us; and as his tall form showed against the horizon and the dark earth of the causeway, I noticed, too, that a lamp of the last of the

carriages threw him up in high relief when he was some fifty feet away from us and on the causeway. There was no tree or bush to screen him from us, and, it may be believed, we watched him with intense concentration. One instant we saw him, the next he was gone; disappeared, like one of the lightning flashes. Under the strain of excitement I jumped out of the carriage, ran to the spot where he was last seen, but no one was there. I saw nothing but the empty road and the back of the carriage that had just passed."

On rare occasions, the Founders were permitted to meet and talk with their invisible teachers in the flesh, and face to face. On two successive nights the Master K. H. visited Colonel Olcott and Damodar at their camp near Lahore. Of the first of these meetings the Colonel says, "The whole time of the interview could not have been longer than ten minutes. The touch of his hand drew me out of the depths of the oblivion of dreamless sleep. I had had a fatiguing day, the tent was very cold, heated only by some embers in a great earthen pot, and I had covered myself to the ears in the bed-clothes. I am touched, I wake with a start, I clutch the arm of my visitor, possibly my would-be assassin; the sweet kind voice breaks the last stupor of slumber; he is there, standing beside my bed, his face aglow with a smile; I see it in the *chiaroscuro* of the back-light. Then the magical creation of the silk-enwrapped letter in my hand, a few words, a farewell salute, he walks past the lamp on the

box, his noble form lingers an instant in the tent-door, he gives a last friendly glance at me, and is gone. It is not much as to time, but the memory will last my life through."

The next night the Master's business was with Damodar, but after it had been despatched, the Colonel was summoned from his tent, and found the Master waiting for him out on the plain in the starlight. "I went to him, we walked off to a safe place at some distance, where intruders need not be expected, and then for about a half-hour he told me what I had to know, and what does not concern third parties. Needless to say, I slept very little on either of those two nights. The august visitor told me that he had not come to me of his own motion entirely, although glad to come to me in person; but had been sent by the Authority higher than himself, who was satisfied with my fidelity and wished me never to lose confidence. There were no miracles done at the interview, no magic circles traced on the ground: just two men talking together, a meeting and a parting when the talk was over."

DAMODAR

Reader, do these few persons to whom I have in this summary manner introduced you, seem, in spite of their high purpose and strenuous endeavor, too touched with "the world's slow stain" to deserve the place herein assigned them—that of prime movers in an organized effort to make shine again the

Inward Light? Witness, then, Damodar, a rare soul on its way to perfection.

Damodar Krishna Mavalankar belonged to a proud and rich family of Brahmins. He voluntarily became outcast and poor in order the better to serve the Masters by serving well those disciples of the Masters, Colonel Olcott and H. P. B. When a lad, brought near to death by fever and tossing in delirium, he had had a vision of a benignant sage, who came and took his hand and told him that he would not die, but would live for useful work. After meeting H. P. B. his interior vision gradually opened, and in him who is known as the master K. H., Damodar saw revealed the visitor of his youthful crisis. This sealed his devotion to the Theosophic cause, and his discipleship to that mysterious being, woman in body, man in intelligence and will, in whom that cause was epitomized. Her lightest word was to him law; her most fanciful wish an imperative command, to obey which he was ready to sacrifice life itself. Frail as a girl though he was, he would sit at his table writing, sometimes all night, unless he was caught and sent to bed; a handful of rice eaten without a moment's remission of labor often sufficed him for his daily fare.

Twice, at least, Damodar met his beloved Master face to face: the first occasion was near the city of Lahore, as witnessed and described by Colonel Olcott; and again, a few days later, Damodar disappeared from Jammu and returned after an absence of some sixty hours. He had been at his Master's retreat

(*Ashram*) undergoing certain training. He left, a delicate-framed, pale, student-like young man, frail, timid, deferential; he returned with his olive face bronzed several shades darker, seemingly robust, tough and wiry, bold and energetic in manner: the change in him was so marked that to his friends he scarcely seemed the same person. This is his own description of his experience:

"I had the good fortune of being sent for and permitted to visit a sacred Ashram, where I remained for several days in the blessed company of several of the Mahatmas of Himavat and their disciples. There I met not only my beloved Gurudeva and Col. Olcott's Master, but several others of the fraternity, including one of the highest. I regret the extremely personal nature of my visit to those thrice blessed regions prevents my saying more about it. Suffice it that the place I was permitted to visit is in the Hymalayas, not in any fanciful Summer Land, and that I saw him in my own physical body and found my Master identical with the form I had seen in the earlier days of my Chelaship. Thus I saw my beloved *Guru* not only as a *living* man, but actually as a young one in comparison with some other Sadhus of the blessed company, only far kinder, and not above a merry remark and conversation at times."

Then he relates some particulars of an hour's intercourse he had, on the succeeding day, with his Master, and concludes as follows: "Of course I am fully aware that many will discredit my account; but I write only for the

benefit of those few who know me well enough to see in me neither a hallucinated medium, nor attribute to me any bad motive, and who have been true and loyal to their convictions and to the cause they have so nobly espoused."

Some time after the Coulomb Conspiracy and Dr. Hodgson's report to the Psychical Research Society had shaken the fabric of the Theosophical Society to its very foundations; when its fair-weather friends were forsaking by the score what seemed to their purblind view a sinking vessel; Damodar, finding his duties as Corresponding Secretary intermitted, and his beloved H. P. B. about to leave India (for what proved to be the last time) decided to put into execution a plan which he had doubtless long cherished, namely, to join his *Guru* in the secret retreat of the Adept Fraternity beyond the Himalayan snows. Accordingly he obtained the necessary permission, took ship for Calcutta, made his way to the frontier with an escort of coolies and then, on April 23, 1885, as the last entry in his diary tells us, he sent back his things, and with nothing but the ascetic costume he was wearing, and a scant supply of food, went on alone. The last that was seen of him by the coolies was when, with face turned toward the Thibetan border he trudged painfully onward, and disappeared behind a turning of the road. With undaunted courage he undertook the hard journey across the Himalayas, indifferent to the cold, the drifted snow, the lack of food and shelter, intent only on finding his Master.

His last letter, given to the coolies whom he sent back, bore pathetic witness of his selfless devotion. That he did find his Master is certain, notwithstanding disquieting rumors which were circulated to the effect that he had perished of exposure in crossing the mountains, for a message came from his Master that he had fared through, and had been lying at death's door in a Thibetan Lamasary; thence he went to his Master's Ashram to win the prize for which he had renounced all. His friends are informed that he will come back to the world he left thus dramatically behind, as one of a company of spiritual teachers of mankind.

This is the history, or rather the mystery of Damodar. Could Stevenson have been inspired by some hint of it, I wonder, in writing the final episode of *The Master of Ballantrae,* wherein Secura Daas, to find the evil Durrisdeer whom he so loved, faces alone the wintry solitudes and lurking death of an Adirondack forest? I think any unprejudiced person will concede that could these bare outlines of Damodar's journey in search of his Master have been filled in by as cunning a hand as the Scotch romancer's, the story would prove even more moving and absorbing than that of the cleverly limned but unconvincing Secura Daas.

RAMASWAMIER

Another similar adventure, instinct with the same spirit of intrepid devotion, is related in a private letter received by Damodar from S.

Ramaswamier, his compatriot, and a Fellow of the Theosophical Society. In it he relates how, being near the Thibetan frontier, he determined to cross it and find his Master or die in the attempt. Without breathing a word of his intention to anyone, with a few rupees in his purse, and no weapon but a pilgrim's staff, alone and on foot he set out upon this dangerous quest, for Thibet was, and is, a "forbidden" country, and without the permission—which he lacked—of the Sikkhim Rajah, the Anglo Indian officials would not have protected him, even if they could, had he fallen into hostile hands.

He was successful: after many hardships, many narrow escapes from death, when near the Thibetan border he was met by a solitary horseman who proved to be the very one he had been seeking. He thus describes their meeting: "As he approached me, he reined up. I looked at and recognized him instantly. I was in the awful presence of him, of the Mahatma, my own revered *Guru,* whom I had seen before in his astral body on the balcony of the Theosophical Headquarters. The very instant saw me prostrated on the ground at his feet. I arose at his command, and, leisurely, looking into his face, forgot myself entirely in contemplating the image I knew so well, having seen his portrait (the one in Colonel Olcott's possession) times out of number. I knew not what to say: joy and reverence tied my tongue. The majesty of his countenance, which seemed to me to be the *impersonation* of power and thought, held me rapt in

awe. I was at last face to face with 'the Mahatma of the Himavat,' and he was no myth, no 'creation of the imagination of a *medium,*' as some skeptics had suggested. It was no dream of the night; it was between nine and ten of the forenoon. There was the sun shining and silently witnessing the scene from above. I see him before me in flesh and blood, and he speaks to me in accents of kindness and gentleness. What more could I want? My excess of happiness made me dumb. Nor was it until some time had elapsed that I was able to utter a few words, encouraged by his gentle tone and speech.

"And now that I have seen the Mahatma in the flesh," he concludes, "and heard his living voice, let no one dare to say to me that the Brothers do not exist. Come now whatever will, death has no fear for me, nor the vengeance of enemies; for what I know I know!"

LONDON DRAWING ROOMS AND DINNER TABLES

A highly important move made by the knightly Colonel on the chess-board of the world was to Ceylon, and over a year later—as a result of this visit—to England, where he went for the purpose of laying before the Colonial Office certain grievances of the Sinhalese nation, which struck at the very root of religious neutrality, and for which no redress could be obtained in Ceylon. He was completely successful in this mission: the

demands of the Buddhists, so far as they could be, were complied with; their right to religious processions was recognized, and the birthday of Lord Buddha was proclaimed a full holiday for the Buddhists of Ceylon.

This business having been satisfactorily despatched, he occupied himself with spreading a knowledge of Theosophy; not alone from the platform, but in London drawing rooms and at London dinner tables. At the house of Mrs. Campbell-Praed, in Talbot Square, he explained the principles and scheme of the Society to as brilliant a party of literary notables as London could bring together. His hostess has vivaciously sketched in one of her novels, *Affinities,* such another occasion, an afternoon reception at the house of Mrs. Arundale, in which H. P. B. played a prominent part. At Mrs. Tennant's he met Sir Edwin Arnold, whom he describes as "a portly man, with a large nose and mouth, thick lips, more of a worldly than a cloistral look, and wearing a black skull-cap." Arnold asked him to lunch at his house and presented him with some pages of the original manuscript of *The Light of Asia,* now in the Adyar Library. At Mrs. Bloomfield Moore's Mr. Sinnett and the Colonel met and talked Theosophy with Browning, which is interesting because so much of Browning's poetry is saturated with a theosophy all his own, different from the Ancient Wisdom only in terminology, not in content. The mysticism of the Eastern teaching must have powerfully appealed to Browning, just as its scientific aspect appealed to

such men as Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Prof. Balfour Stewart; and as earlier, in America, Edison had been attracted to the point of making application for membership in the Society. He never joined, though Crookes did, and remains a member to this day.

The Colonel's diary during the London season of 1884 fairly bristled with great names. In *Old Diary Leaves* he tells us, "Earl Russel had me up to Oxford for a night, and Lord Borthwick, F. T. S., to his place in Scotland for a fortnight. At one table I met an officer of the Queen's Household and a famous general; at another, one of the greatest of modern painters. Everywhere the theme of talk was Theosophy."

THE COULOMBS

That edifice which the two founders had with such arduous labor and glad self-sacrifice succeeded in erecting, never seemed more imposing, more secure: but even as the good Colonel sat at meat with the elect of England, the rats were gnawing behind the wainscot in the persons of two as sorry specimens as the trap of a sudden notoriety ever brought blinking to the light of day. The "explosion" precipitated at headquarters by the Coulombs was of such magnitude that echoes of its reverberation are heard even now, whenever the word Theosophy excites a sneer, whenever the name of Madame Blavatsky is coupled with such terms as "fakir," "fraud," "charlatan," and

"Russian spy." The effect of this explosion, however disastrous to the woman principally affected—and it almost broke her lion heart—was to save Theosophy from a too easy and too early victory, to sift the triflers from the serious workers, and to put the steadfastness of the latter to the severest test. Furthermore, it pointed a way and sounded a warning: the Ancient Wisdom must be offered as food for the heart and mind of man, and not as a sugar-plum to feed his morbid appetite for marvels.

Far back in the days when H. P. B. was traveling about the world in search of knowledge and adventure, sometimes in the role—which she filled perfectly—of a concert pianist, the explosion of a steamer in the Piraetus, on which she was a passenger, left her stranded at Cairo, thankful enough to have escaped alive from the catastrophe, in which most of her shipmates had perished. There she was given help and shelter, while awaiting remittances from Russia, by the Coulombs, man and wife, who were keeping a hotel. The acquaintance was brief, for H. P. B. shortly departed for Russia, but long afterwards, in India, when the fame of the Society had become noised abroad, letters came from Madame Coulomb to Madame Blavatsky, telling a doleful tale of the straits to which she and her husband had been reduced, and asking for the loan of money and help in finding some sort of a situation. This appeal met with such response from the Founders that the Coulombs came to Bombay in the late spring

of 1880, and in due course were established at the headquarters at Adyar, M. Coulomb as man-of-all-work, and his wife as housekeeper and caretaker. She early showed herself to be a natural mischief-maker, quarrelsome, a gossip and tale-bearer, but her gratitude and devotion to her benefactor seemed genuine, she was faithful and efficient in her work, and her husband was a quiet, well-behaved, and seemingly honest person, who was handy with tools and fond of using them.

Affairs went less smoothly at headquarters after the installation of the Coulombs. Madame Coulomb had a way of prying into everybody's private affairs, of reading letters not addressed to her, and she made a practice of trying to awaken the sympathy of new-comers by telling them how, from a life of luxury, she had sunk to a position of servitude. As is the way with such people, she exalted herself by the disparagement of others, and her benefactors were the subject of dark hints and inuendoes: while if asked to explain herself, she would say, "My mouth is shut, I cannot talk against the people whose bread I eat." Worse still, she borrowed money with no intention of paying it back. It was her failure to gain one of these "loans" which led to the catastrophe. Prince Harisinghji of Kathiawâr, to whom she had applied on more than one occasion for two thousand rupees, tired of her importunities, complained at last to Madame Blavatsky, who promptly put an end to an intolerable situation by dismissing from her service Madame Coulomb. H. P. B.

having departed for Europe, the Coulombs lingered on at headquarters, reluctant to leave so snug a berth, despite the exposure. The General Council of the Society thereupon expelled the woman, after having shown by overwhelming evidence that she had misrepresented and maligned the Society, had attempted to extort money from members, wasted the Society's funds, had been guilty of lying and back-biting, had grossly slandered Madame Blavatsky and sent her a blackmailing letter. M. Coulomb, who was found to have aided and abetted his wife in this blackmailing scheme, was asked to resign, and then finally was expelled also. After some further trouble and delay, the pair departed, openly vowing to be revenged.

EXCURSIONS AND ALARMS

The nature of the threatened vengeance presently revealed itself. During the interval between Madame Blavatsky's departure and that of the Coulombs, the latter would not allow anyone at headquarters to enter Madame Blavatsky's rooms, which had always before been freely used by the staff during her frequent absences. They explained the carrying up of the workmen's tools by the statement that the roof leaked and M. Coulomb was mending it. On his enforced leaving, M. Coulomb surrendered the keys to these upper rooms, and an examination disclosed the work on which he had been engaged (declared by him to have been ordered by Madame Blavat-

sky), but which he was unable to carry to completion. It consisted of a system of traps, holes and sliding panels which, with very little labor, could have been finished to look very suspicious, but which in their condition then could (it was thought) deceive nobody, and were therefore left as they had been found and even shown to the numerous visitors at headquarters during the ensuing summer. In Damodar's letter to Madame Blavatsky, relating these circumstances, he says, "We have purposely left the hole and the sliding panel untouched. They bear on their very face the mark of your innocence. The passage behind the Shrine is so small that it is enough to kill a man of suffocation if he were to be two minutes inside. Moreover, it does not communicate with the Shrine. The sliding panels are so new that they can only be worked with force and difficulty, and moreover, make a terrible noise. This proves that they could never have been used before." He did not, however, sufficiently allow for human gullability: the first part of the plot having failed by its too prompt discovery, it was to be revived in the future by the agent of the Psychical Research Society, the only person ever deceived by M. Coulomb's clumsy and half-finished devices. Yet—such is the irony of life—through him people generally have been deceived, for owing to his misrepresentations, few know that, admittedly at the time, none of the arrangements which he describes with such particularity were in existence before Madame Blavatsky left Adyar, and

while the phenomena were occurring which attended this strange, great woman from the cradle to the grave, nor did they exist in the condition described after her return, for in the autumn previous to that event Mr. Judge had had the aperture made by Coulomb, between the rooms, bricked up.

Madame Coulomb's first efforts at being revenged were not successful. She represented to the Collector of the District that the Theosophical Society was conspiring against British rule in India, but she talked such incoherent nonsense that he decided that she was crazy and refused to see her again. She went elsewhere, but her serpent's tongue too plainly betrayed her malice. "Not one respectable gentleman believes her," wrote Damodar to H. P. B., "but they on the contrary sympathize the more with you and the Society."

Foiled for the moment, the Coulombs were not disheartened and their final attempt was destined to be more successful than the first. Goaded by the necessity for money, and furious with the Society, they approached the Missionaries—who had been carrying on a vigorous but unsuccessful crusade against Theosophy. Madame Coulomb, in the character of a repentant Christian (and this may not have been sheer hypocrisy, for the woman was always devout in her strange way), offered the missionaries some twenty letters, purporting to have been written by Madame Blavatsky to Madame Coulomb, in which the former unblushingly confessed to a number of frauds, writing to Madame Coulomb as to her

confederate. They bought the letters, and published them in the Christian College Magazine for September, 1884, and following. On the face of them, to anyone acquainted with Madame Blavatsky, the letters were forgeries, for they were the letters of an uneducated woman, whereas the style of Madame Blavatsky was brilliant, however familiar and conversational, and they were at once recognized as worthless by those best qualified to judge. Moreover, no one ever accused Madame Blavatsky of being a fool, yet who but a fool could have penned insanely compromising letters, and then have quarreled with the woman who held them? Those who knew Madame Blavatsky and were familiar with her handwriting declared them to be forgeries. Neither she nor Colonel Olcott were ever permitted to see them. She met the accusation with characteristic indignation and warmth of language. "I swear by the Master whom I serve faithfully, and for the sake of carrying whose orders I suffer now, let Him curse me in a future birth, aye, in a dozen of births, if I have ever written one line of these infernal letters. I suffer for my misdeeds of centuries ago. I know for *what* I suffer, and bow low my diminished head in humility and resignation. But I bow only to karma and my Master. I will never bow before the padris or the fear of them. . . If you or any one of you verily believe that I was guilty consciously of any trick, or that I used the Coulombs as confederates, or any one else, and that I am not quite the victim of the most

damnable conspiracy ever set on foot, then telegraph me where I am, *never show your face again in the Society,* and I will not. Let me perish, but let the Society live and thrive."

Madame Blavatsky was eager to prosecute the Christian College Magazine for libel, but Colonel Olcott insisted that the matter was one for the Society to decide, and a committee appointed for the purpose unanimously decided against her. She reluctantly submitted, only half comforted by the vehement affection and trust shown toward her.

MR. HODGSON AND THE S. P. R.

While the Colonel was in England he made the acquaintance of several of the members of the London Society for Psychical Research. One of these, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, having witnessed some phenomena in connection with Madame Blavatsky, which, he declared, he could never doubt,—appointed a committee to take "such evidence as the alleged phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society as might be offered by members of that body at the time in England, or as could be collected elsewhere." To this end, Colonel Olcott, Mr. Sinnett and Mohini M. Chatterji were duly questioned. The ground covered by the inquiry was as to the appearance of phantasms of the living; the projection and material constitution of the human Double; appearances and communication with the same at distances from the physical body; visits to the witnesses from living Adepts or Mahatmas;—and vari-

ous physical phenomena of an unusual order, which, according to her own relatives and to dozens of other then living witnesses, had attended Madame Blavatsky from her childhood.

The evidence was inconclusive, in the opinion of the committee, and they sent Mr. Hodgson to India for the purpose of verifying statements which the witnesses had made, and to collect such other evidence as he should be able. On his arrival in India, this self-confident young man, profoundly ignorant of Indian ways, and of that "night side" of nature which he had been commissioned to explore, was used by the discredited Coulombs as an instrument for their long-delayed vengeance. Unknown, untried, eager to acquire a reputation for acuteness, with the cocksureness of youth, he had made up his mind that certain things were not within the range of possibility and so pre-judged the case before examining into it, with the result that he lent a too-willing ear to evidence—from whatever source—favorable to an opinion already rooted in his mind. His later history affords one of those numerous examples of life's little ironies. As he progressed in the study of phenomena of abnormal consciousness he became convinced of the reality of many forces which he had light-heartedly ridiculed, and at the end came to believe himself to be under the guidance, in every detail of his daily life, of such a familiar spirit as he had proved to his satisfaction could not possibly exist. For this idiosyncrasy he was credited, by certain of

his Boston acquaintances and friends, with being such another good-natured gull as he had believed Colonel Olcott to be.

In the mission which he had undertaken, Mr. Hodgson's attitude throughout was not the attitude of the investigator, but that of the sceptic, searching only for proofs of fraud. He naively supposed that everyone in India devoted to the work of the Theosophical Society might be assumed, on that account, to be desirous of securing his good opinion and of pursuading him that the alleged phenomena were genuine, whereas nothing would have pleased some of the Indian members better than to have convinced European outsiders that there was no such thing as Indian occultism, and that the Theosophical movement was a sham and a delusion. Having the traditional attitude of mind in regard to their treasures of knowledge, namely that these are the rightful acquirement only of persons who have passed through several ordeals and privations, they could not but regard the Theosophical movement in India (in which the ancient restrictions were intermitted) as a desecration, even though they were themselves drawn into it under an authority so great that they could not but submit. In many cases their submission had been no more than superficial, their fidelity being due entirely to the Masters they served, and not at all to the cause in which they were employed—that of giving to any chance comer the priceless jewel which could be striven for, even, only by the elect.

The two sources, therefore, from which Mr. Hodgson derived the most of his information—the Coulombs and the natives—were poisoned by a hatred and a prejudice which he was the last man to understand or allow for. It was inevitable, under the circumstances, that he should pronounce the phenomena fraudulent, and Madame Blavatsky one of the most remarkable impostors of history; but he was worried by one weak link in the chain which he had so elaborately forged, namely, the question of motive: what could have actuated this woman to go to all the risk and trouble to produce and perpetuate this gigantic "fake"? He felt that he could not face the committee without some answer to this question, since it was known that she sought neither gain nor notoriety, and that her entire life was devoted to the forwarding of a philanthropic idea. He triumphed over this difficulty by suggesting that she must have been a Russian political agent, working in India to foster disloyalty to the British government—ignorant or unmindful of the fact that she had been notably the reverse. The single scrap of evidence by which he bolstered up this egregious argument was a fragment of Madame Blavatsky's handwriting obtained from his guide and counselor, Madame Coulomb, which was later discovered by Mr. Sinnett to be the discarded part of a long translation of Colonel Grodekoft's Travels in Central Asia, which Madame Blavatsky had made at his request for publication in the *Pioneer*.

Mr. Hodgson's report would have had no greater nor more lasting effect upon the destinies of the Society and its Founder than any other wrong-headed reading of the dial on which history, moment by moment, records itself in the life of the time, had not the committee, and through them the Society for Psychical Research, lent the weight of its great name to the findings he had made. This they did without giving the defense a chance to be heard, furnishing, as Mr. Sinnett says, what is probably an unprecedented example of a judicial refusal to hear a defense on the ground that the *ex parte* statement of the prosecutor has been convincing by itself.

So much for the S. P. R. Report—the report, be it remembered, of *one man,* attempting investigation of occult mysteries by the methods of a Scotland Yard detective: trying to measure the firmament below the horizon of human consciousness by the footrule of a mind not equal to the measure of such a woman as Madame Coulomb. Should any reader of these pages desire to form his own conclusions about this matter, from the existing evidence, he has but to read the December, 1885, Report of the Proceedings of the London Society for Psychical Research, for the prosecution, and Mrs. Besant's *H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters of Wisdom,* for the defense.

THE COUNTESS WACHMEISTER

The Countess Wachmeister, wife—and widow—of a Swedish Count who had been a minister to the Court of St. James, was a woman of the world, the last person, one would have said, to exchange a life of ease and honor for one of wandering and sometimes shabby Bohemianism, in the service of the high-priestess of a cult considered, in the popular mind, more strange and outrageous than any other; but a great and generous spirit struck off the golden chains which bound it and followed a light which to the world was darkness, considering the world well lost for the privilege of living in close intimacy with one whom she considered to be the wisest and noblest of human-kind.

Her first glimpse of H. P. B. was in 1884, at the Sinnetts, in London. This is her description of their meeting: "My reception by my hostess was cordial, and I was at once introduced to Madame Blavatsky. Her features were instinct with power, and expressed an innate nobility of character that more than fulfilled the anticipations I had formed; but what chiefly arrested my attention was the steady gaze of her wonderful gray eyes, piercing yet calm and inscrutable; they shone with a serene light which seemed to penetrate and unveil the secrets of the heart. When, however, I turned to look upon those who surrounded her, I experienced a revulsion of feeling that for a time left an uneasy impres-

sion upon my mind. It was a strange scene that met my view. On the floor, at the foot of the low ottoman on which Madame Blavatsky was seated, several visitors were grouped who gazed up at her with an expression of homage and adoration, others hung upon her words with a studied show of rapt attention, and all seemed to me more or less affected by a prevailing tone of flattery. As I sat apart and looked at what was passing before me, I permitted suspicions, which I have since learned to be perfectly groundless and gratuitous, to rest in my mind. . . I could not then tell that her nature was inherently incapable of degrading its powers and its great mission to the purpose of a cheap popularity."

The Countess saw Madame Blavatsky once more before leaving London, though this time no words passed between them, and she had no expectation of their ever meeting again; but one evening, to her great surprise, she received a letter addressed in an unfamiliar handwriting, which proved to be from H. P. B. In it she invited the Countess to come and see her in Paris, as she was anxious for a private interview. The temptation to know more of one whose personality interested her so profoundly, decided the Countess to return to Sweden *via* Paris. The promised interview did not take place in that city, however, but—after many delays and difficulties—at Enghien, at the country seat of the Countess d'Adhémars, where both women were guests. It was one of those "communion of souls" of precious memory, in which Destiny for a moment lifts

the veil from its face. Madame Blavatsky told the Countess many things which she thought were known only to herself, and declared that before two years had passed she would devote her life wholly to Theosophy.

This prediction, which owing to the circumstances of the Countess' life, seemed impossible of fulfillment, came true punctually within the time named, and in the following manner. In the autumn of 1885, she was visiting Madame Gebhard, at Eberfeld, en route to Italy, where she planned to spend the winter with some friends. As the time for her departure drew near, Madame Gebhard spoke to her of a letter she had received from Madame Blavatsky, in which she deplored her loneliness, saying that she was ill in body and depressed in mind. "Go to her," said Madame Gebhard, "she needs sympathy and you can cheer her. For me it is impossible. I have my duties, but you can befriend her if you will."

The Countess decided that if H. P. B. desired her company she would spend a month with her before starting for the South. Accordingly, she joined H. P. B. at Würtzburg, remained with her all the ensuing winter, and, with intervals of absence, to the time of her death.

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

The Countess found Madame Blavatsky living in restricted quarters, seeing nobody but her doctor and her landlord, working from seven in the morning until seven at night on

what was to be her magnum opus, *The Secret Doctrine*. This was to consist, when complete, of four volumes, and it would give out to the world as much of the esoteric doctrine as was advisable at the time. "It will, of course, be very fragmentary," she told her visitor, "and there will of necessity be great gaps left, but it will make men think, and as soon as they are ready, more will be given out. But," she added, after a pause, "that will not be until the next century, when men will begin to understand the book intelligently."

Such a statement, under ordinary circumstances, would have appeared the height of fatuous conceit—but the circumstances were not ordinary. Madame Blavatsky, as she herself knew, was not the author of this monumental work, except in a restricted sense; she was the medium of communication between the Masters of Wisdom, the real authors, and the Western world. The Countess had abundant evidence of this, from almost the first moment of her stay. Hardly had the greetings been exchanged between the women, when Madame Blavatsky said abruptly, as though the matter had been dwelling in her mind,

"Master says you have a book for me of which I am much in need."

"No, indeed," replied the Countess, "I have no books with me."

"Think again," she said, "Master says you were told in Sweden to bring a book on the Tarot and the Kabbalah." Then the Countess remembered that as she was preparing for

her journey she had come across a collection of notes on the "Tarot" and passages in the Kabbalah, that had been compiled for her by a friend. She had been about to place it in a heap of things to be locked away until her return, when she had heard a voice say, "Take that book, it will be useful to you on your journey." At this she had changed her mind and had laid the book in the bottom of one of her trunks, thinking no more about it until the incident was recalled in this astonishing manner. But this was not the end; when she returned from her room with the volume, which she found tucked away just where she remembered putting it, Madame Blavatsky made a gesture and cried, "Stay, do not open it yet. Now turn to page ten and on the sixth line you will find the words . . . " and she quoted a passage. The Countess opened the book, which, as has been said, was no printed volume of which there might be a copy in H. P. B.'s possession, but a manuscript compilation, and on the page and at the line indicated she found the very words that had been quoted. To the question why she had wanted the book, H. P. B. replied, "For *The Secret Doctrine.* Master is collecting material for me. He knew you had the book and told you to bring it that it might be at hand for reference."

Not long after her arrival, the Countess was entrusted with the task of making fair copies of H. P. B.'s manuscript, and thus got glimpses of the subject matter of *The Secret Doctrine,* and of the terrible toil of writing it.

Often reams of manuscript, carefully prepared and copied, would be consigned to the flames. One day, walking into H. P. B.'s writing room, the Countess found the floor strewn with sheets of discarded manuscript. When asked the meaning of this scene of confusion, H. P. B. replied, "I have tried twelve times to write this one page correctly, and each time the Master says it is wrong. I think I shall go mad, writing it so often; but leave me alone, I will not pause until I have conquered it, even if I have to go on all night." An hour later the passage was completed to her satisfaction, and as she leant back enjoying her cigarette and the sense of relief from arduous effort, she described her method of work. "You see, what I do is this. I make what I can only describe as a sort of vacuum in the air before me, and fix my sight and my will upon it, and scene after scene passes before me like the successive pictures of a diorama; or, if I need a reference of information from some book, I fix my mind intently and the astral counterpart of the book appears, and from it I take what I need. The more perfectly my mind is freed from distractions and mortifications, the more energy and intentness it possesses, the more exactly I can do this."

The circumstance which, perhaps more than any other, attracted the attention and excited the wonder of her amanuensis when she began to help Madame Blavatsky, was the poverty of her traveling library. Her manuscripts were full to overflowing with references, quotations, allusions, from a mass of rare and

recondite works on subjects of the most varied kind. Now she needed verification of a passage from some book only to be found in the Vatican, and again from some document of which only the British Museum possessed a copy. Yet it was only verification she needed. The matter she had, however she may have gained it—certainly she could not have procured her information from the handful of very ordinary books she carried about with her. "Shortly after my arrival in Würtzburg," writes the Countess, "she took occasion to ask me if I knew anyone who could go for her to the Bodleian Library. It happened that I did know someone I could ask, so my friend verified a passage that H. P. B. had seen in the Astral Light, with the title of the book, the chapter, page and figures all correctly noted. Once a very difficult task was assigned to me; namely, to verify a passage taken from a manuscript in the Vatican. Having made the acquaintance of a gentleman who had a relative in the Vatican, I with some difficulty succeeded in verifying the passage. Two words were wrong, but all the remainder correct, and, strangely enough, I was told that these words, being considerably blurred, were difficult to decipher."

WATCH AND WARD

An incident of frequent occurrence which came under the notice of the Countess marked another mode in which guidance and aid came from the Masters. Often early in the morn-

ing she would see on H. P. B.'s writing table a piece of paper with unfamiliar characters traced upon it in red ink. On asking her what was the meaning of these mysterious notes, she replied that they indicated her work for the day.

There was another occurrence, continually repeated over a long period, which impressed the Countess very strongly with the conviction that Madame Blavatsky was watched and cared for by unseen guardians. "From the first night that I passed in her room," she says [the two occupied the same apartment], "I heard a regularly intermittent series of raps on the table by her bedside. They would begin at ten o'clock each evening, and would continue, at intervals of ten minutes, until six o'clock in the morning. They were sharp, clear raps, such as I never heard at any other time. Sometimes I held my watch in my hand for an hour at a stretch, and always as the ten minute interval ticked itself out, the rap would come with the utmost regularity. Whether H. P. B. was awake or asleep mattered nothing to the occurrence of the phenomena, nor to its uniformity. When I asked for an explanation of these raps, I was told that it was the effect of what might be called a sort of psychic telegraph, which placed her in communication with her Masters, and that the chelas might watch her body while her astral left it."

The Countess describes still another incident which confirmed this view, that there were agencies at work in her neighborhood whose

nature and actions were inexplicable on generally accepted theories of the constitution and laws of matter.

"H. P. B. was accustomed to read her Russian newspapers at night after retiring, and it was rarely that she extinguished her lamp before midnight. There was a screen between my bed and this lamp, but nevertheless the powerful rays, reflected from ceiling and walls, often disturbed my rest. One night this lamp was burning after the clock had struck one. I could not sleep, and as I heard by H. P. B.'s regular breathing that she slept, I rose, gently walked around to the lamp and turned it out. There was always a dim light pervading the bedroom, which came from a night-light burning in the study, the door between that room and the bedroom being kept open. I had extinguished the lamp and was going back, when it flamed up again and the room was brightly illuminated. I thought to myself—what a strange lamp, I suppose the spring does not act, so I put my hand again on the spring, and watched until every vestige of the flame was extinct, and even then held down the spring for a minute. Then I released it and stood for a moment longer, watching, when, to my surprise, the flame reappeared and the lamp was burning as brightly as ever. This puzzled me considerably and I determined to stand there by the lamp and put it out all through the night, if necessary, until I discovered the why and wherefore of its eccentricities. For the third time, I pressed the spring and turned it down until the lamp was quite

out, and then released it, watching eagerly to see what would take place. For the third time the lamp burned up, and this time I saw a brown hand slowly and gently turning the knob of the lamp. Familiar as I was with the action of astral forces and astral entities on the physical plane, I had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that it was the hand of a chela, and surmising that there was some reason why the lamp should remain alight, I returned to my couch. But a spirit of perversity and curiosity dwelt within me that night. I wanted to know more, so I called out 'Madame Blavatsky!' then, louder, 'Madame Blavatsky!' and again, 'Madame Blavatsky!' Suddenly I heard an answering cry,—'Oh, my heart! my heart! Countess, you have nearly killed me:' and then, again, 'my heart! my heart!' I flew to H. P. B.'s bedside. 'I was with Master,' she murmured, 'why did you call me back?' I was thoroughly alarmed, for her heart fluttered under my hand with wild palpitation. I gave her a dose of digitalis, and sat beside her until the symptoms had abated and she had become calmer. Then she told me how Colonel Olcott had once nearly killed her in the same way, by calling her back suddenly when her astral form was absent from her body. She made me promise that I would never try experiments with her again, and this promise I readily gave, out of the fulness of grief and contrition for having caused her such suffering."

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

The quiet, studious life led by the two women was rudely broken in upon, by the arrival one morning, by early post, of a copy of the *Report of the Society for Psychical Research.* It was a cruel blow, and, in the form it took, wholly unexpected. The Countess writes, "I shall never forget that day, nor the look of blank and stony despair that she [H. P. B.] cast on me when I entered her sitting room and found her with the book open in her hands."

In the intensity of her passion at first she would not listen to reason, but turned against her companion, saying, "Why don't you go? Why don't you leave me? You are a Countess, you cannot stop here with a ruined woman, with one held up to scorn before the whole world, one who will be pointed at everywhere as a trickster and an imposter. Go before you are defiled by my shame."

Her sensitive nature was too deeply wounded, her indignation at unmerited wrong too strongly stirred, to listen at first to counsels of patience and moderation. She bitterly blamed Colonel Olcott for his part in bringing her "phenomena" to the attention of the S. P. R.; she anathemized the thing itself: "O cursed phenomena, which I only produced to please friends and instruct those around me." Most of all she feared the effect of the Report upon the reception by the world of *The Secret Doctrine,* to which she was sacrific-

ing her health, her leisure, and even the wherewithal to live, for she had refused a large yearly salary offered by a Russian paper, in order to devote herself solely to this book.

As might be imagined, she had no heart in her work, and for a time found it impossible to continue. "I have no longer the vitality or the energy left in me," she affirmed. "Too much of it was exhausted at the time when I produced my phenomena."

"Why, then, did you make these phenomena?" inquired the Countess.

"Because people were continually bothering me," she replied, "It was always, 'Oh, do materialize this,' or, 'do let me hear the astral bells,' and so on, and then I did not like to disappoint them. I acceded to their request. Now I have to suffer for it!"

At other times, H. P. B. stoutly defended the course she had taken which had brought down calamity upon her, claiming that at the time when the Theosophical Society was formed it was necessary to draw the attention of the public to the fact, and that phenomena served this object more effectually than anything else could have done. Had she given herself out, in the first instance, simply as a teacher of philosophy, very few students would have been drawn to her side. It required an attraction such as is provided by the love of the marvelous, to awaken people to that initial interest which might lead later to serious study. It was thus that phenomena had started the Society, but the element once introduced, it was difficult to eliminate, when it had

served its turn. All came eager to have their sense of wonder gratified, and when disappointed went away wrathful and indignant. Her lack of firmness in this matter, with its terrible train of consequences to her, made her aware of its importance. In a memorandum penned by H. P. B., on what she believed to be her dying bed, she says, "After my death these phenomena, which are the direct cause of my premature death, will take place better than ever. But whether dead or alive, I will be ever imploring my friends and brothers never to make them public; never to sacrifice their rest, their honor, to satisfy public curiosity or the empty pretext of science."

Following the publication of the Report, letters came in containing nothing but recrimination and abuse; the resignations were many, and apathy and fear fell upon those who remained. It was a trying time; the very existence of the Society seemed threatened, and H. P. B. felt as though the ground she had gained was crumbling away under her feet. She recognized, at last, that for her there was no hope or remedy in legal proceedings, so that her only public remonstrance to the great affront to her honor was the publication of the subjoined letter of protest. Let the reader judge for himself whether it is the utterance of a greatly wronged and greatly indignant woman, or the last desperate device, in the face of exposure, of a clever trickster, to evade the ignominy attendant upon detected deceit.

MADAME BLAVATSKY'S PROTEST

"The Society for Psychical Research have now published the Report made to one of their Committees by Mr. Hodgson, the agent sent out to India to investigate the character of certain phenomena, described as having taken place at the Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in India and elsewhere, and with the production of some of which I have been directly or indirectly concerned. This Report imputes to me a conspiracy with the Coulombs and several Hindus to impose on the credulity of various persons around me by fraudulent devices, and declares to be genuine a series of letters alleged to be written by me to Mme. Coulomb in connection with the supposed conspiracy, which letters I have already myself declared to be in large part fabrications. Strange to say, from the time the investigation was begun, fourteen months ago, and to this day, when I am declared guilty by my self-instituted judges, I was never permitted to see those incriminating letters. I draw the attention of every fair-minded and *honorable Englishman* to this fact.

"Without at present going into a minute examination of the errors, inconsistencies, and bad reasoning of this Report, I wish to make as publicly as possible my indignant and emphatic protest against the gross aspersions thus put upon me by the Committee of the Psychical Research Society at the instigation of the single, incompetent, and unfair inquirer

whose conclusions they have acepted. There is no charge against me in the whole of the present Report that could stand the test of an impartial inquiry on the spot, where my own explanations could be checked by the examination of witnesses. They have been developed in Mr. Hodgson's own mind, and kept back from my friends and colleagues while he remained at Madras abusing the hospitality and unrestrained assistance in his inquiries supplied to him at the Headquarters of the Society at Adyar, where he took up the attitude of a friend, though he now represents the persons with whom he thus associated—as cheats and liars. These charges are now brought forward supported by the one-sided evidence collected by him, and when the time has gone by at which even he could be confronted with antagonistic evidence and with arguments with which his very limited knowledge of the subject he attempted to deal with do not supply him. Mr. Hodgson, having thus constituted himself prosecutor and advocate in the first instance, and having dispensed with a defence in the complicated transactions he was investigating, finds me guilty of all the offences he has imputed to me in his capacity as judge, and declares that I am proved to be an arch-imposter.

"The Committee of the P. R. S. have not hesitated to accept the general substance of the judgment which Mr. Hodgson thus pronounces, and have insulted me publicly by giving their opinion in favor of their agent's conclusions—an opinion which rests wholly

and solely on the Report of their single deputy.

"Wherever the principles of fairness and honorable care for the reputation of slandered persons may be understood, I think the conduct of the Committee will be regarded with some feeling resembling the profound indignation of which I am sensible. That Mr. Hodgson's elaborate but misdirected inquiries, his affected precision, which spends infinite patience over trifles and is blind to facts of importance, his contradictory reasoning and his manifold incapacity to deal with such problems as those he endeavored to solve, will be exposed by other writers in due course, I make no doubt. Many friends who know me better than the Committee of the P. R. S. will remain unaffected by the opinions of that body, and in their hands I must leave my much-abused reputation. But one passage in this monstrous Report I must, at all events, answer in my own name.

"Plainly alive to the comprehensive absurdity of his own conclusions about me as long as they remained totally unsupported by any theory of a motive which could account for my life-long devotion to my Theosophical work at the sacrifice of my natural place in society in my own country, Mr. Hodgson has been base enough to concoct the assumption that I am a Russian political agent, inventing a sham religious movement for the sake of undermining the British Government in India! Availing himself, to give color to this hypothesis, of an old bit of my writing, apparently supplied to him by Madame Coulomb, but

which he did not know to be as it was, *a fragment of an old translation* I made for the *Pioneer* from some Russian travels in Central Asia, Mr. Hodgson has promulgated this theory about me in the Report, which the gentlemen of the S. P. R. have not been ashamed to publish. Seeing that I was naturalized nearly eight years ago a citizen of the United States, which led to my losing every right to my pension of 5,000 roubles yearly as the widow of a high official in Russia; that my voice has been invariably raised in India to answer all native friends that, bad as I think the English Government in some respects—by reason of its unsympathetic character—the Russian would be a thousand times worse; that I wrote letters to that effect to Indian friends before I left America on my way to India, in 1879; that every one familiar with my pursuits and habits and very undisguised life in India, is aware that I have no taste for or affinity with politics whatever, but an intense dislike to them; that the Government of India, which suspected me as a spy because I was a Russian, when I first went to India, soon abandoned its needless *espionage,* and has never, to my knowledge, had the smallest inclination to suspect me since—the Russian spy theory about me which Mr. Hodgson has thus resuscitated from the grave, where it had been buried with ridicule for years, will merely help to render his extravagant conclusions about me more stupid even than they would have been otherwise in the estimation of my friends, and of all who really

know me. But looking upon the character of a spy with the disgust which only a Russian who is *not* one can feel, I am impelled irresistibly to repudiate Mr. Hodgson's groundless and infamous calumny with a concentration of the general contempt his method of procedure in this inquiry seems to me to merit, and to be equally deserved by the Committee of the Society he has served. They have shown themselves, by their wholesale adoption of his blunders, a group of persons less fitted to explore the mysteries of psychic phenomena than I should have thought—in the present day, after all that has been written and published on the subject of late years—could have been found among educated men in England.

"Mr. Hodgson knows, and the Committee doubtless share his knowledge, that he is safe from actions for libel at my hands, because I have no money to conduct costly proceedings (having given all I ever had to the cause I serve), and also because my vindication would involve the examination into psychic mysteries which cannot be dealt fairly with in a court of law; and again because there are questions which I am solemnly pledged never to answer, but which a legal investigation of these slanders would inevitably bring to the front, while my silence and refusal to answer certain queries would be misconstrued into "contempt of court." This condition of things explains the shameless attack that has been made upon an almost defenceless woman, and the inaction

in face of it to which I am so cruelly condemned."

THE DEATH OF THE LION

In 1886, at Ostend, H. P. B. succumbed, seemingly, to her infirmities, and took to her bed, lying in a state of lethargy for hours together, all efforts to rouse or interest her proving of no avail. The Countess Wachmeister, who was with her, called in the Belgian practitioner, and summoned Doctor Ashton Ellis by telegraph from London. The two physicians, after consulting together, declared that it was unusual for anyone to survive so long with the kidneys attacked as H. P. B.'s were, and held out no hope for recovery. Madame Gebhard suggested that H. P. B. being so near death, ought to make her will, for if she died intestate in a foreign country there would be no end of confusion and annoyance about her property, as she had no relations near her. Her belongings consisted only of her clothes, a few books, some jewelry, and a few pounds in cash, but still it was thought advisable that the will should be made, and a lawyer, the two doctors, and the American Consul were asked to be present for the purpose.

The night preceding the day appointed for this meeting, the Countess passed beside H. P. B.'s bedside, scarce hoping that she would live until morning. Madame Blavatsky told her companion how glad she was to die, and that she thought the Master would let her be

free at last. She expressed anxiety about the Secret Doctrine, and gave some last instructions as to the disposal of her manuscripts. She talked on, at intervals, during the night, telling of many things. At last she dropped off into a state of unconsciousness, leaving the Countess to her sombre reverie.

A wave of blank despondency swept over the watcher, as she felt how truly she had loved this noble woman, and realized how empty life would be without her. Her feelings found vent in one bitter cry, and then she lost consciousness of everything about her.

"When I opened my eyes," she writes, "the early morning light was stealing in, and a dire apprehension came over me that I had slept, and that H. P. B. had died during my sleep—died whilst I was untrue to my vigil. I turned round toward the bed in horror, and there I saw H. P. B. looking at me calmly with her clear grey eyes, as she said, 'Countess, come here.' I flew to her side. 'What has happened, H. P. B.—you look so different from what you did last night?' She replied, 'Yes, Master has been here; he gave me my choice, that I might die and be free if I would, or I might live and finish *The Secret Doctrine*. He told me how great would be my sufferings and what a terrible time I would have before me in England (for I am to go there); but when I thought of those students to whom I shall be permitted to teach a few things, and of the Theosophical Society in general, to which I have already given my heart's blood, I accepted the sacrifice, and now to make it complete,

fetch me some coffee and something to eat, and give me my tobacco box.' "

When the Countess went to tell Madame Gebhard the good news, this lady insisted upon her going to bed, while she attended H. P. B. herself. When the Countess came down, later in the day, an atmosphere of joy pervaded the entire household. H. P. B. was up and dressed, talking merrily, and all were awaiting the arrival of the party who were to come and superintend the making of the will. When they arrived, with serious faces, expecting to be shown into the presence of a dying woman, they were much taken aback at the transformation. H. P. B., seated in her chair in the dining room, smoking a cigarette, jocularly offered one to the doctor and began chaffing him. The lawyer was puzzled, and turned to the doctor for an explanation. He began excusing himself, repeating several times, *"Mais elle aurait du mourir,"* but the American Consul, like a man of the world, came forward, shook hands with H. P. B., and told her that he was delighted that she had cheated death this time, and after an animated and amusing conversation, all proceeded, in the highest spirits, to the business in hand.

From this time onward, almost to the day of her death a few years later, Madame Blavatsky continued to labor as ceaselessly as ever, and under conditions of such physical disability as to render, not simply her working, but actually her living, truly marvelous. The microscope revealed enormous crystals of uric

acid in her blood. Never before had a patient been known to live even for a week under such conditions. Frequently she had attacks of cerebral apoplexy, but without any treatment known to medical science, she warded them off, and went on with her work, confident that her life would not end before her work was fully accomplished; and so it proved. *Tod, der Freund,* came to her on the eighth of May, 1891, in London. She had fought a good fight, she had finished her course.

ANNIE BESANT

The final snap-shot in this meager gallery of verbal kodaks shall portray a meeting more momentous, perhaps, than any yet described: that which took place between Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant, in London, in the spring of 1889.

The great and eager spirit, which, in 1847, in the body of Annie Wood, opened new eyes to the murky light of London, had ceaselessly struggled for forty-two years to be free. It fled from prison to prison—Established Religion, Atheism, Free Thought, Neo-Malthusianism, Socialism—until, spent and desperate, it found its way "Home" at last, by seeking out, with an unerring instinct, that disciple of the Masters, H. P. B.

In 1889 Mr. Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* gave her "The Secret Doctrine," by H. P. Blavatsky, to review. "As I turned over page after page," she says, "the interest became absorbing; how familiar it seemed;

how my mind leapt forward to presage and conclusions, how natural it was, how coherent, how subtle, and yet how intelligible. I was dazzled, blinded by the light in which disjointed facts were seen as parts of a mighty whole, and all my puzzles, riddles, problems, seemed to disappear."

After writing the review, she asked Mr. Stead for an introduction to Madame Blavatsky, and then sent a note asking to be allowed to call. She received the most cordial of invitations, and with Herbert Burrows, whose aspirations took a similar bent, she presented herself at the door of number 17 Lansdowne Road.

Mrs. Besant thus describes their meeting: "I was standing with my hand in her firm grip, and looking for the first time in this life straight into the eyes of 'H. P. B.' I was conscious of a sudden leaping forth of my heart—was it recognition?—and then, I am ashamed to say, a fierce rebellion, a fierce withdrawal, as of some wild animal when it feels a mastering hand." The visit passed in commonplaces almost to the end. "Nothing special to record, no word of Occultism, nothing mysterious, a woman of the world chatting with her evening visitors. We rose to go, and for a moment the veil was lifted, and two brilliant, piercing eyes met mine, and with a yearning throb in the voice: 'Oh, my dear Mrs. Besant, if you would only come among us!' I felt a well-nigh uncontrollable desire to bend down and kiss her, under the compulsion of that yearning voice, those

compelling eyes, but with a flash of the old unbending pride and an inward jeer at my own folly, I said a commonplace polite good-bye, and turned away with some inanely courteous and evasive remark. 'Child,' she said to me long afterwards, 'your pride is terrible; you are as proud as Lucifer himself.' But truly I think I never showed it to her again after that first evening, though it sprang up wrathfully in her defense many a time, until I learned the pettiness and worthlessness of all criticism, and knew that the blind were objects of compassion, not of scorn."

A second and more satisfactory interview made it clear that, fight against it as she would, her fate was pursuing her: the Hounds of Heaven were again at her heels driving her from any home her spirit had made for itself in the world of men toward new horizons. She saw with fatal clearness that to embrace so unpopular a cause as Theosophy was to plunge into a new vortex of strife, to alienate her friends, and to become a mark for ridicule, at the very moment in her career when, having conquered public prejudice, a smoother road stretched out before her. The struggle was sharp and keen, but with none of the anguish of old days in it. Her decision was soon taken: she went again to Lansdowne Road to ask about the Theosophical Society. Madame Blavatsky looked at her piercingly for a moment. "Have you read the report about me of the Society for Psychical Research?" she asked, and being answered in the negative: "Go and read it, and if, after reading it, you

come back—well." And nothing more would she say on the subject, but branched off to her experiences in many lands.

Mrs. Besant borrowed a copy of the report, read and re-read it. "Quickly I saw," she says, "how slender was the foundation on which the imposing structure was built. The continual assumptions on which conclusions were based; the incredible character of the allegations; and—most damning fact of all—the foul source from which the evidence was derived. Everything turned on the veracity of the Coulombs, and they were self-stamped as partners in the alleged frauds. Could I put such against the frank, fearless nature that I had caught a glimpse of, against the proud, fiery truthfulness that shone at me from the clear, blue eyes, honest and fearless as those of a noble child? Was the writer of 'The Secret Doctrine' this miserable imposter, this accomplice of tricksters, this foul and loathsome deceiver, this conjuror with trap-doors and sliding panels? I laughed aloud at the absurdity and flung the report aside with the righteous scorn of an honest nature that knew its own kin when it met them, and shrank from the foulness and baseness of a lie." The next day she signed an application to be admitted as a fellow of the Theosophical Society. On receiving her diploma she sought out Madame Blavatsky again, and the two dwelt together in closest intimacy and unbroken trust until the death of the older woman, in 1891.

THE RUSSIAN SPHINX

What manner of woman was this Madame Blavatsky, believed by some to have been a cheat and a charlatan, a dangerous imposter, by others a spiritual medium, and by still others the prophet of a new religion. Was she, on the one hand, simply an uninspired, undirected, unobsessed Russian lady, doing literary and philanthropic work along certain self-chosen lines, or, on the other, was she (as she claimed to be) the representative, mouthpiece and conscientious amanuensis of high intelligences, not discarnate, but physically distant from that part of the world which formed the field of her activities?

There is a temptation to shirk the whole inquiry, on account of its difficulty, for the character of Madame Blavatsky is anomalous in the extreme. No exactly similar case has been recorded. The two poles of her nature appeared to be as far apart as the stars. It is incontrovertible that she had a violent and ill-controlled temper, was often harsh, often hasty, often profane, that she over-indulged a capricious and somewhat gross appetite. It is equally incontrovertible that she was chaste, generous, forgiving, amusing, lovable; that she sacrificed her station, her patrimony, her ease, her honor, her wealth, her life itself, for a high and noble cause. Colonel Olcott says, "With ordinary persons like myself and her other intimate associates, I should not say that

she was either loyal or staunch; they were but as pawns in a game of chess, but she was loyal to the last degree to her aunt, and her other relatives, and for the invisible Masters she would have died twenty deaths." Although she was a superb musician, having been a pupil of Moscheles, and having performed at a concert with Madame Clara Schumann, she had no eye for colors and proportions and so little of that innate aesthetic sense which makes a woman dress herself becomingly that only the compelling power of her eyes, the exquisite beauty of her hands, the indefinable, yet ineffaceable stamp of high birth, saved her from the ridicule of the unthinking. In her youth a rebellious pupil, with no love of serious literature, no attraction to learned people, the reverse of a book-worm, having up to her thirty-fourth year never written one word in English, and having never published any work in any language, after that time she edited several magazines and produced, in a language not her own, encyclopedic works bristling with strange knowledge and deep erudition, working not with the ease and happy ardor of the artist, and when the mood and moment favored, but with grim determination, each day and all day, ill or well.

Confronted with authenticated facts so ambiguous as these, concerning her outer life in the world, what shall be said of that night-side of her nature, concerning which so little is known? I can only cite the testimony of those who know her best. Colonel Olcott says, "I have known mediums of all

sorts—speaking, trance, writing, phenomena-making, medical, clairvoyant, and materializing; have seen them at work, attended their seances and observed the signs of their obsession and possession. H. P. B.'s case resembled none of them. Nearly all they did she could do; but at her own will and pleasure, by day or by night, without forming 'circles,' choosing the witnesses, or imposing the usual conditions. Then, again, I had ocular proof that at least some of those who worked with us were living men, from having seen them in the flesh in India after having seen them in the astral body in America and Europe; from having touched and talked with them. Instead of telling me that they were spirits, they told me that they were as much alive as myself, and that each of them had his own peculiarities and capabilities; in short, his complete individuality. They told me that what they had attained to, I should, one day, myself acquire; how soon, would depend entirely upon myself; and that I might anticipate nothing whatever from favor, but, like them, must gain every step, every inch of progress by my own exertions."

The Countess of Wachmeister, in that long night vigil which has been described, mused thus over the woman beside whose bed she watched: "None of those who knew her really understood her. Even to me, who have been alone with her so many months, she was an enigma, with her strange powers, her marvelous knowledge, her extraordinary insight into human nature, and her mysterious life, spent in regions unknown to ordinary mortals, so

that though her body might be near, her soul was often away in commune with others. Many a time have I observed her thus and known that only her body was present."

The most valuable testimony of all comes from Madame Blavatsky's niece, Madame Vera Johnston, who, in a letter to the Countess Wachmeister, quotes H. P. B. as having said to her, "You are very green if you think that I actually know and understand all the things I write. How many times am I to repeat to you and your mother that the things I write are dictated to me, that sometimes I see manuscripts, numbers, and words before my eyes, of which I never know anything."

And in what manner have the Masters themselves referred to her? Reader, make of this what you can: "the Brother you know as H. P. B., but we—otherwise."

THE KEY TO THE CRYPTOGRAM

I can well imagine the reader unacquainted with the Ancient Wisdom to have followed this veracious narrative with growing incredulity and bewilderment. To him it must have seemed a cryptogram without a key. That key I now supply him in the one word *Reincarnation:* It fits, it turns, it opens, and lo! the truly amazing becomes amazingly true. What have we here but the story of a successive series of *recognitions?* These people did not become acquainted in the ordinary way; they sought one another out to resume relations

established and cemented in many antecedent earthly lives.

As the householder, when the fields are ready, goes forth and summons the reapers for the harvest, so do the Masters, who are "just men made perfect," when the time is ripe, gather for the harvest of souls the faithful of those who have served them and learned from them in former lives. Their agents are many, and scattered in many places. These work for the most part unaware, and when they see wonderful results follow their efforts, often suffer the delusion of the cock in Rostand's drama, who thought that his crowing made the sun to rise; but the wise and noble-hearted ones are more humble, and know themselves to be but instruments in the hands of higher powers. This, surely, is the consummate human felicity: to be used by the Great Ones as a vehicle for their compassion, —and to know it; just as the most unhappy thing in life is to be used by the ignoble for base ends.

This work of choosing is going forward now more rapidly than ever before. Think of it! In a thousand places a thousand dramas are being enacted such as I have here described,— for one of the duties of the already chosen is to summon others, so that from the original center, around each broadening circle a new and wider circle ripples forth, gathering volume, gaining momentum, to break at last in all beneficence and refreshment on some unimaginable coast of Time.

To share in this movement is the prerogative

of every human creature, but the Masters of Reality require first, an open-eyed choice, then entire allegiance; and if the feverish and unreal pleasures of the world content you, if its petty prizes still seem worth the effort of achieving, it is a sign that these things have still their lessons for you; that you are not ready for the larger life. You will not know (so great is His kindness), that your Master has passed you—for the moment—by.

THE COMING AVATAR

What is the reason for this urgency? Why are these vast shadows cast upon the curtain of the present, when the time immediately antecedent knew them not?

It is because time is not, as it is often imagined, a straight line of infinite extension, but a circle, or rather a spiral, which, in its return, brings the to-morrow of the world nearer to some long-vanished yesterday than to the passing hour. Punctually by that sidereal clock whose dial is the blue vault of heaven, whose numerals are the constellations, the same influences begin to operate which have been before in operation bringing again to birth in the world those soul-groups which produced some vanished civilization and this, in obedience to the karmic law, they strive to realize and recreate, but amid new surroundings, and under different conditions, which makes the resultant like, yet unlike, that which had been before. Theosophy teaches that one of these major cycles has just been completed;

that another morning of the world is presently to dawn. Its cock-crow will be an *avatara:* the descent into incarnate existence of One for whom the necessity for re-birth has ceased, save for the helping of mankind. This occurs only at the confluence of two epochs, when an existing order is about to give place to some other, when new potencies press hard upon old forms and practices, when spring in the ice-locked universal heart dreams vaguely of some golden age of long ago.

The present is such a time: not actually, of course, but psychologically we are in a condition analogous to that which prevailed when Christianity arose and swept away the outworn paganism of Rome. Now, as then, strange faiths are prevalent; the perversion, by minds unfitted to receive them, of great truths which the heart accepts and understands; now, as then, a single victorious civilization (the Teutonic) dominates the world; as of old, there is peace between the nations, though the more devastating, if less sanguinary conflict between classes is becoming ever more relentless and acute. Like the Romans of the Empire, glutted with slaughter, men in increasing numbers are turning away, sad and satiated, from the dusty arena of competitive industrialism in search of something better and happier; this mean warfare, with its waste of lives, appears to them worse, because more cowardly, than the lust and blood of an age which had not learned to hide its vices with hypocrisy, but rather dignified them by art. Such look for light amid the darkness; they

listen for words of prophecy and power,—but their oracles only maunder, or are mute.

Again the world awaits its Messiah. The message of Theosophy is that He will come, as He has ever come, out of the East; that He will teach, as He has ever taught, the Ancient Wisdom, the kernel of which is *the unity of all that lives,* and the corollary, *Universal Brotherhood.*

THE CHOSEN

Theosophy teaches that all so called sacred writings—and many profane ones—are inspired, the power of their appeal to the best in human nature being an index of the sublimity of their source. But just as from the Aryan race sprang all of our Western races; just as its language, the Sanskrit, is at the root of all our speech; so the ancient religion of the Aryans is the fecund mother of all the religions which have since appeared in the world. Theosophy holds, in other words, that all differences between faiths, philosophies, and "systems" are differences of form and not of content; colorations caused by the refracting medium, the mind of man, in transmitting the white light of Divine truth, implanted there from the beginning of the world.

In that oldest of all religious literatures we read, "This is the truth. As from blazing fire sparks, being like unto fire, fly forth a thousand fold, thus are various beings brought forth from the imperishable, my friend, and

return thither also." Christ put the same thing simply and practically in his two commandments, love of the Lord, and love of one's neighbor. He took pains to state that the second was *like the first,* but men missed the correlation, and fell to worshipping a god remote in the skies, while crucifying him incarnate in themselves, and so went on "making great and greater things that are not of God." But observe the outcome: materialism, the sure resultant of any code of life which has its foundation not on conduct, but on concept, now finds itself self-refuted by its latest researches, and science, which it had tried to make its own, discovers no more accurate nor more adequate statement—condensed into a single phrase—of its latest generalization, than that contained in the Upanishads: "Time ripens and dissolves all beings in the Great Self." Science must therefore—sooner or later—accept the Ancient Wisdom, and interpret, by means of it, all the phenomena of life.

But science can never take the place of religion; the power to transform and transfigure consciousness resides not in *manas,* but in *buddhi*—not in the mind but in the soul—and science, being founded on observation and reason, brings into activity no human principle superior to the mind. On this account, although the evolution on the threshold of which we are standing will receive a great impetus and enrichment from the changed attitude of science towards life, that evolution will be led and directed, not by men in whom

the manasic principle has reached its highest development—the scientists; but by those in whom the buddhic is beginning to unfold—the "saints."

What is the distinguishing characteristic of *buddhi?* How does it manifest itself in man? By a spirit of brotherliness, friendliness, helpfulness, by *sympathy,* the quality of being affected by the state or condition of another with feelings correspondent in kind. The truly sympathetic person makes no sharp distinction between himself and others; their suffering and enjoyment are in a measure his, thus indicating that he has in some degree entered into that part of his consciousness—though of this he may be unaware—which dwells upon the plane (the buddhic) where all are One.

The keynote of the civilization which has until now dominated the world has been the development of the mind, the enthronement of reason. The sense of separateness, of differences, whereby this has been accomplished must now give place to one of co-ordination: Men must be taught that the sense of separateness—implanted in them for a specific purpose—is an illusion; that all are actually and indissolubly united; unless they learn this, with their new-found mastery over nature's finer forces, they will destroy themselves and devastate the world. It is clear that those in whom the sense of separateness has been intensified by occupation and training are disqualified for this work: it must be undertaken by the less efficient, less worldly wise,

but more altruistic and more spiritually-minded. A perception of this has from first to last governed the Masters who are preparing the world for the coming of the Great Teacher, in the choosing, in the manner described, of their disciples. "We knew not," writes Colonel Olcott, of himself and Madame Blavatsky, "but those Adepts knew, that we two were to serve as the necessary nuclei for the concentration and diffusion of that âkâshic stream of old Aryan thought which the revolution of cycles had brought again into the focus of human needs. An agent is always indispensable as the vortex-ring of these intellectual and spiritual recrudescences, and, imperfect as we were, we yet were good enough to serve the present purpose, since we had at least the enthusiasm of sympathy and the quality of obedience." It will be evident, from all the foregoing, why a belief in Human Brotherhood is the only affirmation of faith necessary in becoming a member of the Theosophical Society, which is one of the "necessary nuclei" for the forces which are to rejuvenate the world. That it is not the only one, nor the largest, nor even—possibly—the most important, must be evident to any close and discriminating observer of the tendencies of the times. Wherever meek righteousness is found overcoming entrenched and arrogant corruption; co-operation replacing competition, service to the weak supplanting their spoliation, wherever ugliness is flushing into art, ignorance into knowledge, and cruelty giving place to kindness,—there the Masters are

engaged in drilling their cohorts for the greater and yet more distant battle: the conquest, not of the world, but of the Self within the Heart.

THE ANCIENT WISDOM IN THE MODERN WORLD

WHAT is the Ancient Wisdom, which, antedating recorded history, is yet the New Thought of the present hour? Adequately to answer this question would require an entire literature; yet the answer lies dormant in the mind of everyone: it is the knowledge and the love of what the Chinese call Tao, the Hindus, the Higher Self, the Christians, Christ. The Ancient Wisdom is at once a philosophy, a science, and an art. As a philosophy it postulates man as the reflection of the cosmos, "his inner and real Self being eternal, one with the Self of the universe; and his evolution, by repeated incarnations, into which he is drawn by desire, and from which he is set free by knowledge and sacrifice, becoming divine in potency as he has ever been divine in latency." As a science it presents the cosmic scheme in detail, crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's, so to speak; it cognizes and examines the constitution, mechanism, and phenomena of the various planes or modifications of matter through which the Great Self manifests itself, and the vehicles or bodies corresponding to these planes in which the individualized Self energizes on each of them in turn,—or, according to the ancient teaching, the universe is instinct in every part with vibrations of life, of consciousness, and evolution is a continually increasing power to re-

spond to these vibrations. At the present stage of his evolution, man responds to only a few, and these put a limit on his feelings and knowledge, but the power is latent in him to respond to them all, and birth and rebirth, life, death, love, and suffering are Nature's means to bring about this result. As an art, that is practically, the Ancient Wisdom offers a scientifically worked-out method whereby this evolutionary process may be hastened, and the Self sooner merged with the All-Self.

Now each science and each art must have its own method; if a man wants to be an astronomer he goes to an observatory and studies the stars through a telescope; if a chemist, he goes to the laboratory, compounds substances, and experiments with them; or if he desires to be a painter he gets brushes, pigments, canvas, and sets to work. In every case his success will be measured by his ability to concentrate all the powers of his mind upon the subject in hand. Similarly, if a man's aim is to know and to develop his higher Self, he uses the same instrument, the mind; and the same method, concentration; but because his Self is within and behind the mind he must turn the mind inward, and this requires a great deal of practice. From our childhood upward we have been taught only to pay attention to things external, never to pay attention to things internal. To turn the mind, as it were, inside, stop it from going outside, and then to concentrate all its powers and throw them upon the mind itself in order that it may know its own nature, is very hard work.

Though I do not recommend the experiment, for it might prove disturbing and perhaps dangerous, I venture to assert that any one who would eliminate from his diet all products of ferment and decay, and for about fifteen minutes every day assiduously would practice this stilling of the mind, and the focusing of it on that which is within, before the year was over he would find things happening to him unrecorded in any physiology or psychology. He would find them described accurately and in detail in certain books written some thousands of years ago, however,—and with a complete nomenclature full of fine shades of meaning, for realms of matter and states of consciousness of which we do not even recognize the existence. Language is always the correlative of something; is it reasonable to suppose that this Ancient Wisdom is all a fabric in the air,—that the centuries of effort which the Hindus have devoted to the religious life have been utterly barren of result? The argument so often advanced, with such show of reason, that the present condition of India is not favorable to the high claims made for its ancient religion is no more valid than would be an attempt to discredit the Renaissance movement on account of the art impotence of Italy to-day. These things involve the karma of nations, their growth, and decay. It is only necessary to remember that what is sown here is often reaped afar; the spiritual seed sown on the banks of the Nile and of the Ganges, and in Palestine, so long ago, we are about to reap here and now. For

with the simultaneous return to incarnation of certain groups of souls, the collective human mind is rapidly entering new regions of consciousness, and this will result in the development of new faculties, organs, powers, in the same slow, orderly, and healthy fashion that those which we have already won have been developed in the past. Every flower bed has its early blossoms, on every tree some fruit ripens and falls before the rest; and because the fruit of the human tree ripens unequally, certain of those in whom these faculties, organs, powers, are already partially operative, are producing (for the most part ignorantly, blindly, automatically) phenomena so strange, so disturbing, so outside ordinary experience, and so counter to some of the materialistic theories of matter, that most scientific men have been disposed to deny them, ignore them, or confine them to the realm of the merely pathological. This last has been rendered easy by reason of the fact that just as the windfall is generally found to have a worm at its core, the prematurely developed human being is apt to be neurotic or otherwise unhealthy,—the body being not yet evolved which is able to withstand the shock of these etheric forces. Those scientists who have shown a disposition to examine, understand, and classify the phenomena of the so-called subconscious—to chart those regions into which the mind can plunge but into which the senses cannot as yet penetrate—find themselves handicapped, first, by the absence of any rational hypothesis to confirm or to confute; and second, by the

inadequacy for their purpose of existing machinery and methods—since it is clear that the subjective cannot be attained by the same instruments and methods of study which discover the objective. Lacking the first, they have thus far only succeeded in accumulating a mass of sufficiently well authenticated, but confused and often conflicting evidence; lacking the second, they have seized upon the medium, the clairvoyant, the hypnotized subject as a means to gain their end, ignorant or unmindful of the harmfulness and danger of this method.

Theosophy—the Ancient Wisdom—answers both these needs: the first, by furnishing a rational hypothesis which accords with all the known facts, which every new discovery helps to confirm, and which will help to new discoveries; the second, by pointing out the way to the development of those finer vehicles of consciousness which are man's already, though he has not learned to use them, by means of which it is possible to investigate transcendental matter at first hand. This being so, it is no wonder that Theosophy makes so strong an appeal to a certain type of scientific mind. It is the opinion of Mr. Jinarajadasa, himself a scientist of more than amateur ability, that the world will receive its next spiritual impetus from science; that science will put upon a firm and rational foundation the faith of the mystic, the altruism of the saint.

Theosophy, because it is both a religious science and a scientific religion, meets the spiritual needs of the present time. These

appear to be three in number: first, since this is a practical and scientific age, religion, in order to be a power in the world, must be practical and scientific. Theosophy is both these things and at no sacrifice of that mystical quality which is the dynamic force at the root of every religion. As has been said, "it restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching man to know the spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants." Second, the need is felt in all the churches of some unifying, co-ordinating force. Theosophy is such a force because it embraces "that body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It illuminates the scriptures and the doctrines of religion by unveiling their hidden meanings, thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition." Third, a religion which meets the needs of the day must embody as its cardinal principle the idea of human brotherhood. Buddhism and Christianity alike embody this idea, but Theosophy takes it directly into the realm of the actual by showing that the principle of individuation whereby each man appears to himself a separate entity, is a temporary state, and in the manner of an illusion possible to be transcended: that the many selves are in reality One Self, differing only in the degree of their realization of this solidarity.

As a result of the new ferment of psychic life in our materialistic civilization, the vast reservoir of Theosophic knowledge and ex-

perience is being tapped in several different places at once, and the Spiritualist, the Christian Scientist, the devotee of the so-called New Thought, each bathes in his little stream which to his newly awakened perception seems to him ocean wide. The first communes with the spirits of his dead, or that which he believes to be such; the second denies the existence of matter and puts at naught the achievements of medical and surgical science; the third meditates on his solar plexus, and breathing through alternate nostrils, feels new potencies stirring within him. All incur dangers the nature of which only the trained occultist knows, and it is another of the missions of Theosophy to instruct all such well meaning but usually misguided persons as to just how their particular fragment of truth fits into the general scheme of things, and to warn them against dangerous practices. Theosophy is in a position to do this, because it recognizes the reality of the phenomena with which these cults concern themselves, while science does not. The man trained in Theosophy is able to instruct the spiritualistic medium that by relinquishing himself to the obsession of any wandering spirit of the Astral plane he is enervating his will and forging new fetters for already earth-bound spirits, delaying their normal evolution and his own. He tells the Christian Scientist that by his insistence upon the truth that all matter is a manifestation of spirit, and vitalized by it, he fails to do justice to the complementary truth, that spirit while clothed in the matter of the physical plane partakes

of its nature and incurs its limitations, and must be dealt with according to the laws and operations of that plane. He tells the New Thought devotee that while meditation on the solar plexus and restraint of the breath may for a time improve the health and develop a low form of psychism, without a corresponding moral and intellectual control they degenerate into Hatha Yoga practices which are fraught with danger.

In fine, Theosophy teaches that there are no short cuts to health and happiness and knowledge; that the way to liberation is by doing one's duty and following one's conscience, but it also teaches that without omitting an essential step of the journey, by right thinking and economy and concentration of effort, the normal rate of advance may be enormously accelerated.

While Theosophy concerns itself with psychic phenomena, so-called, since it cognizes vast realms of invisible matter, each teeming with its appropriate life—realms which man, in his normal evolution, comes to know one by one and master just as he is already coming to know and master the matter of the physical plane, on which his consciousness for the most part dwells—it nevertheless does not base its claim to consideration upon "tests," upon "manifestations" as Spiritualism does. The inception of the Theosophical movement was attended with phenomena of a so-called miraculous nature—as every great religious movement has been—in order to attract the attention of the world. This is no longer neces-

sary, and the later policy of the Society has been to bring the philosophical, humanitarian, and ethical aspects of the Ancient Wisdom most prominently into view. I am informed, and I have abundant reason to believe, that many of those following Theosophic lines of training are in the possession and the daily exercise of powers which might pass among the uninformed as miraculous, but as pupils of occultism are pledged to use their powers neither for gain nor for display, it is small wonder that outsiders do not see evidences of them.

The fact that the Theosophic movement is so largely a feministic one has often elicited a sneer from the unthinking, but what spiritual movement of the present day has not been feministic? This is a gibe which recoils upon the man who gives it utterance: it convicts him and his sex of an inferior susceptibility to what is fine and high. It was Emerson who said, "Women, as most susceptible, are the best index of the coming hour." There is a deeper, a more philosophical reason why so many of the leaders of these modern movements have been women: it is because they embrace and typify the feminine side of the divine nature. The masculine is centrifugal, destructive, the feminine centripetal, constructive. The slow triumph of the feminine over the masculine, as evinced by the emancipation of woman, the cultivation of the arts of peace, and the like, is the clue to much of our past history, and this Theosophical movement is but

another impulse in the direction in which we are already pointed.

In conclusion, I urge the reader not to dismiss Theosophy lightly as only another *ism* of the day. I have but pricked the surface of the subject in this brief essay, and it is small wonder if it contains much which the mind instinctively rejects. Any first view of the subject must appear, to the uninitiated, complicated and strange, but a great simplicity lies behind this seeming complexity, a great familiarity behind this seeming strangeness. The several fundamental concepts conform to, and confirm one another, and shape themselves, as it were, into a symmetrical solid of simple shape but of many faces. Those familiar with the Ancient Wisdom find themselves coming more and more to think in terms of it, whether they accept it or not. It is thus that it prevails in the world; not by the authority of dogma, the pomp of ritual, the wonder of miracle, but by a slow and quiet conquest of the mind.

THE MASTERS*

by

ANNIE BESANT

AMONG the many questions to which Theosophy gives rise, none perhaps awakens more interest and arouses more inquiry than that of "The Masters." What is indicated by the term? Who are they? Where do they live? What do they do? These, and many other questions, are constantly heard. Let me try to throw a little light on these questions; to answer them, at least, partially.

WHAT IS MEANT BY A MASTER?

A Master is a term applied by Theosophists to denote certain human beings, who have completed their human evolution, have attained human perfection, have nothing more to learn so far as our part of the solar system is concerned, have reached what the Christians call "Salvation," and the Hindus and Buddhists "Liberation." When the Christian Church still kept "the faith once delivered to the Saints" in its fulness, salvation meant much more than escape from everlasting damnation. It meant the release from compulsory re-incarnation, safety from all possibility of failure in evolution. "To him that overcometh" was the promise that he should be "a pillar in the

* From *Bibby's Annual.*

Temple of my God, and *he shall go out no more.*" He that had overcome was "saved."

The conception of evolution, which implies a gradual expansion of consciousness, embodied in ever-improving material forms, underlies the conception of Masterhood. The perfection it connotes is to be reached by every human being, and clearly perfection cannot be gained in the course of one brief human life. The differences between man and man, between genius and dolt, between saint and criminal, between athlete and cripple, are only reconcilable with the divine justice if each human being is in course of growth from savagery to nobility, and if these differences are merely the signs of that growth. At the apex of such a long evolution stands "the Master," embodying in himself the highest results possible to man of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. He has learned all the lessons that humanity can assimilate, and the value of all the experience the world can give is his. Beyond this point, evolution is superhuman; if the conqueror returns to human life it is a voluntary action, for neither birth can seize him nor death touch him, save by his own consent.

We must add something to this for the full conception of masterhood. The Master must be in a human body, must be incarnate. Many who reach this level no longer take up the burden of the flesh, but using only "the spiritual body" pass out of touch with this earth, and inhabit only loftier realms of existence. Further, a Master—as the name

implies—takes pupils, and in strictness the term should only be applied to those who discharge the special function of helping less-advanced men and women to tread the arduous road which takes them "by a short cut" to the summit of human evolution, far in advance of the bulk of their fellow-men. Evolution has been compared to a road winding round and round a hill in an ascending spiral, and along that road humanity slowly advances; there is a short cut to the top of the hill, straight, narrow, rugged and steep, and "few they be that find it." Those few are the pupils, or "disciples" of the Masters. As in the days of the Christ, they must "forsake all and follow Him."

Those who are at this level, but do not take pupils, are concerned in other lines of service to the world, whereof something will presently be said. There is no English name to distinguish these from the teachers, and so, perforce, the word Master is applied to them also. In India, where these various functions are known as coming down from a remote antiquity, there are different names for the different functions, but it would probably be difficult to popularize these in English.

We may take, then, as a definition of a Master: a human being who has perfected himself and has nothing more to learn on earth, who lives in a physical body on earth for the helping of man, who takes pupils that desire to evolve more rapidly than their race, in order to serve it, and are willing to forsake all for this purpose.

It may, perhaps, be necessary to add, for the information of those who are not familiar with the Theosophical conception of evolution, that when we say "a perfect man" we mean a good deal more than is generally connoted by the phrase. We mean a consciousness which is able to function unbrokenly through the five great spheres in which evolution is proceeding; the physical, intermediate and heavenly worlds, to which all men are now related, and in addition to these the two higher heavens—St. Paul, it may be remembered, speaks of the "third heaven"—which ordinary humanity cannot as yet enter. A Master's consciousness is at home in all these and includes them all, and his refined and subtle bodies function freely in them all, so that he can at any time know and act at will in any part of any one of them.

WHO ARE THE MASTERS?

The grade occupied by the Masters is the fifth in the great Brotherhood, the members of which have outpaced normal evolution. The four lower grades consist of initiated disciples, who live and labour, for the most part, unknown in the everyday world, carrying on the work assigned to them by their superiors. At certain times in human history, in serious crises, in the transitions from one type of civilization to another, members of the Occult Hierarchy, Masters and even loftier Beings, come out into the world; normally, although incarnate, they remain in retired

and secluded spots, away from the tumult of human life, in order to carry on the helpful work which would be impossible of accomplishment in the crowded haunts of men.

Jesus—during the first thirty years of His life, before His baptism, when the "Spirit of God" descended upon Him and thenceforth abode in Him, raising the human body to be the Temple of the incarnate Christ—was the purest and holiest of disciples, and hereafter, as man, achieved Masterhood, and became the Lord and Master of the Church founded by the Christ. It is significant that in the Church belief, the reality of the continuing human body is laid stress upon, "*wherewith* He ascended into heaven." Through all the troubled ages of Christianity, the Master Jesus has been the Guardian and Shepherd of His Church, guiding, inspiring, disciplining, purifying, century after century, and now pouring forth the stream of mystic Christianity which is watering the garden of Christendom and causing fair blossoms to flower forth once more. Clothed in a body He has taken from Syria, He is waiting the time for His reappearance in the open life of men.

Hilarion—once Iamblichus of the Neo-Platonic Schools, who gave through M. C. *Light on the Path,* and through H. P. Blavatsky *The Voice of the Silence,* skilled craftsman in poetic English prose and in melodious utterance—is laboring also for the coming time, and will play his part in the drama of the New Age.

Those who are named M. and K. H., in

The Occult World by Mr. Sinnett, were the two Masters who founded the Theosophical Society, using Colonel H. S. Olcott and H. P. Blavatsky, both disciples of M., to lay its foundations; and who gave to Mr. Sinnett the materials from which he wrote his famous books—the one named above and *Esoteric Buddhism*—which brought the light of Theosophy to thousands in the West. H. P. Blavatsky has told how she met the Master M., on the bank of the Serpentine, when he visited London in 1851.

The last survivor of the Royal House of Rakoczi, known as the Comte de S. Germain in the history of the eighteenth century; as Bacon in the seventeenth; as Robertus the monk in the sixteenth; as Hunyadi Janos in the fifteenth; as Christian Rosencreutz in the fourteenth—to take a few of his incarnations—was disciple through these laborious lives and now has achieved Masterhood, the "Hungarian Adept" of *The Occult World,* and known to some of us in that Hungarian body.

And there is the "Venetian," and the "Serapis" who taught Colonel Olcott for a while, and "the Old Gentleman of Tiruvallur," that H. P. Blavatsky named thus quaintly, visited in his Nilgiri retreat by Subba Rao and C. W. Leadbeater, the retreat some eighty miles from Adyar, where he lives secluded, watching the world as it changes, and plunging deeply into the abstruser sciences of which chemistry and astronomy are the outer shells.

These are some of the Masters, more or

less publicly known, and to be known more publicly ere the present century is numbered with the past.

WHERE DO THE MASTERS LIVE; WHAT DO THEY DO?

They live in different countries, scattered over the world. The Master Jesus lives mostly in the mountains of Lebanon; the Master Hilarion in Egypt—he wears a Cretan body; the Masters M. and K. H. in Tibet, near Shigatse, both using Indian bodies; the Master Rakoczi in Hungary, but traveling much; I do not know the dwelling places of "the Venetian" and the Master Serapis. Dwelling places of the physical body seem to mean so little when the swift movements of the subtle body, freed at will from the grosser one, carry the owner whither he wills at any time. "Place" loses its ordinary significance to those who are free denizens of space, coming and going at will. And though one knows that they have abiding places where dwells usually the physical body, that body is so much of a vesture, at any moment to be readily laid aside, that the "where" loses its interest to a great extent.

The Masters aid, in countless ways, the progress of humanity. From the highest sphere they shed down light and life on all the world, that may be taken up and assimilated, as freely as the sunshine, by all who are receptive enough to take it in. As the physical world lives by the life of God, focused by the sun, so does the

spiritual world live by that same life, focused by the Occult Hierarchy. Next, the Masters specially connected with religions use these religions as reservoirs, into which they pour spiritual energy, to be distributed to the faithful in each religion through the duly appointed "means of grace." Next comes the great intellectual work, wherein the Masters send out thought-forms, of high intellectual power, to be caught up by men of genius, assimilated by them and given out to the world; on this level also they send out their wishes to their disciples, notifying to them the tasks to which they should set their hands. Then comes the work in the lower mental world, the generation of the thought-forms which influence the concrete mind and guide it along useful lines of activity in this world, and the teaching of those who are living in the heavenly world. Then the large activities of the intermediate world, the helping of the so-called dead, the general direction and supervision of the teaching of the younger pupils, and the sending of aid in numberless cases of need, in the physical world the watching of the tendencies of events, the correction and neutralising as far as law permits, of evil currents, the constant balancing of the forces that work for and against evolution, the strengthening of the good, the weakening of the evil. In conjunction with the Angels of the Nations also they work, guiding the spiritual forces as the others guide the material, choosing and rejecting actors in the great Drama, influencing the

councils of men, supplying needful impulses in the right direction.

These are but a few of the activities ceaselessly carried on in every sphere by the Guardians of Humanity, some of the activities which come within our limited vision. They stand as a Guardian Wall around humanity, within which it can progress, uncrushed by the tremendous cosmic forces which play around our planetary house. From time to time, one of them comes forth into the world of men, as a great religious teacher, to carry on the task of spreading a new form of the Eternal Verities, a form suitable to a new race or civilization. Their ranks include all the greatest Prophets of the Faiths of the world, and while a religion lives, one of these great Ones is ever at its head, watching over it as his special charge.

During the present century, one of those great crises in the history of humanity will occur, which mark the conception of a new civilization. He whom in the East men call the Wisdom-Truth, the World-Teacher, and whom in the West men call the Christ, will ere long return incarnate upon earth and move once more among the busy crowds of men. With Him will come several of the Masters, to aid His work and spread abroad His message. The hurrying rush of the present events, the intolerable burdens crushing down the peoples, the menace of war, the chaos of opinions, political, social, and religious; all these and many more are the signs of the changing times, of the passing away of the old,

of the birthing of the new. It will, indeed, be a new world on which the eyes of the infants of to-day will gaze in their maturity; for again is ringing forth the ancient saying: "Behold! I create a new heaven and a new earth. Behold I make all things new."

OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

First — *To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sect, caste, or color.*

Second — *To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy, and Science.*

Third — *To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.*

THE Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good-will whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideas, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but a duty they perform ; and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of Divine Wisdom, and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watch-word, as Truth is their aim.

The headquarters of the Theosophical Society are at Adyar, Madras, India, and National Sections and branches exist in various nations throughout the world. The chief officer of the American Section is Weller Van Hook, M. D., of Chicago, and the American headquarters are in that city. Annual conventions are held by the National Sections and biennial conventions by the Society, the place of meeting for the latter being some European city. Anybody desiring further information about the Society should address Weller Van Hook, 103 State Street, Chicago, the General Secretary for America.

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